

THE ARGOSY.

MAY 1, 1872.

WITHIN THE MAZE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS BLAKE ON THE WATCH.

"**L**UCY, you will come with me to the opening service?"

Lady Andinnian shook her head. "I think not, Theresa."

"Why, it would be quite a distraction for you," urged Miss Blake using the word in the French sense.

Sir Karl had been in London some three or four days now; and Lucy, all aweary without him, was longing and looking for his return every hour of the live-long summer's day. But she was proof against this offered temptation.

"I don't think Karl would like me to go to it, Theresa. Thank you all the same."

"Do you mean to make Sir Karl your guide and model through life, Lucy?"—and Lady Andinnian, sincere and simple herself, detected not the covert sarcasm.

"I hope I shall never do, or wish to do, anything that he would object to," was her answer, a sweet blush dyeing her cheeks.

"Well, if you won't appear at church, will you attend the kettle-drum afterwards, Lucy?"

"The kettle-drum!" echoed Lucy. "What kettle-drum?"

"We are going to hold one at Mrs. Jinks's—that is, in Mr. Cattacomb's rooms—for the purpose of introducing him to some of his friends, and to organize the parish work."

Lady Andinnian looked up in surprise. "The parish work? What can you be talking of, Theresa?"

"Oh, there will be district visiting, and that. It must all be arranged and organized."

"Will it not be interfering with Mr. Sumnor?"

"Not at all. Shall I come round this way and call for you as we return from the service?"

"Thank you, no, Theresa; I would rather not. I do not think I should myself much care for the kettle-drum."

"Very well," coolly replied Miss Blake. "As you please, of course, Lady Andinnian."

The service at St. Jerome's was at length about to be inaugurated: for the Reverend Guy Cattacomb had duly appeared after a few days' delay, for which he satisfactorily accounted. It was to be held in the afternoon, he having arrived in the morning; and Miss Blake, while talking to Lady Andinnian, was already dressed for it. She started forth alone: just as other eager young women, mostly young, some middle-aged, were starting for it, and flocking into St. Jerome's.

Much inward speculation had existed as to what the new parson would be like; and the ladies looked at him eagerly when he entered from the vestry to commence the service. They saw a tall young man in a narrow surplice, with a sheep-skin tippet worn hind before, and a cross at the back in the opening: spectacles; no hair on his face, and not over much on his head, a few tufts of it only standing up like young carrots; eyes very much turned up. Certainly, in regard to personal beauty, the new pastor could not boast great things; but he made up for it in zeal, and—if such a thing may be said of a clergyman—in vanity; for that he was upon remarkably good terms with himself and his looks, every tone and gesture betrayed. It was rather a novel service, but a very attractive one. Mr. Cattacomb had a good, sonorous voice—though it was marred by an affected accent and a drawing kind of delivery that savoured of insincerity and was most objectionably out of place. Miss Jane St. Henry played the harmonium; and the young ladies' singing, so far as it went, was good, but it wanted men's voices. There was a short sermon, very rapidly delivered, and not to be understood—quite after a new fashion of the day. During its progress, little Miss Etheridge happened to look round, and saw Mr. Moore, the surgeon, at the back.

"If you'll believe me, there's old Moore here!" she whispered to Mary St. Henry.

Yes, the surgeon was there. He had laughed a little over this curious new place that was being called a church, and said at home that day that he should look in and see what its services were to be like. He was more surprised than pleased. Just as Mr. Smith the agent had asked, Is it Roman Catholic or Protestant? so did Mr. Moore mentally ask the question now. The place was pretty full. Some few people had come over from Basham to be present. Mr. Moore's eyes went ranging amid the chairs, scanning the congregation. His daughters were not there. They are too sensible, thought the doctor.

But the fact was, the Misses Moore had been afraid to come. Hearing their father say he should look in, they deemed it wise to keep away—and did so, to their own deep mortification and disappointment. Mr. Moore was an easy tempered man, and an indulgent father; but if once in a way he did by chance issue an edict, it might not be disobeyed—and had he seen them there with his own eyes, he might have prohibited their going for the future. So they allowed policy to prevail, and stayed at home.

What with the opening service, and what with the coming party at Mrs. Jinks's, Foxwood was that day stirred to its centre. The preparations for the kettle-drum were on an exhaustive scale, the different ladies having vied with each other in sending in supplies. Butter, cream, delicate bread and cakes, jam, marmalade, choice fruit, biscuits, and other things too numerous to mention. Miss Blake had taken a huge package of tea, and some beautiful flowers, the latter offering cajoled out of old Maclean, the head gardener at the Court.

The walk to St. Jerome's and back, together with the excitement of the new service, had made them thirsty, and it was universally agreed to take tea first, though only four o'clock, and proceed to business afterwards. The table groaned under the weight of good things on it, and Miss Blake presided. The room was too small for the company, who sat or stood as they could, elbowing each other, and making much of Mr. Cattacomb. Tongues were going fast, Mr. Cattacomb's amidst them, and Miss Blake was getting hot with the work of incessantly filling cups from the tea-pot, when a loud knock, announcing further visitors, shook the street door and Paradise Row.

"Who can it be? I'm sure we have no room for more!"

Mrs. Jinks went to see. Throwing open the door, there stood the Misses Moore. Though debarred of the opening service, they would not be done out of the kettle-drum.

"Are they here yet, Mrs. Jinks?" cried the young ladies eagerly.

"Yes, they *are* here," replied the Widow Jinks, her cap (clean for the occasion, and no bonnet) trembling with suppressed wrath.

"Oh dear! Has tea begun?"

"Begun, Miss *Jemima*! it's to be hoped it's three-parts over. I'll tell you what it is, young ladies: when I agreed to let my parlours to the Reverend Cattakin, I didn't bargain to keep the whole parish in kettle-drumming. Leastways, not to wait on 'em; and bile kettles for 'em, and toast muffins for 'em by the hour at a stretch. I thought what a nice quiet lodger I should have—a single man, and him a minister! Instead of which I might just as well keep an inn."

The young ladies walked on, wisely giving no answer, and entered the parlour. There they were presented to Mr. Cattacomb, and joined the tea-table.

Kettle-drums, as we are all aware, cannot last for ever, and before

six o'clock Miss Blake was on her way back to Foxwood Court. The discussion as to district visiting and other matters was postponed to another day, Mr. Cattacomb pleading fatigue (and no wonder); and Miss Blake—who was in point of fact the prime mover and prop and stay of it all—inwardly thinking that a less crowded meeting would be more conducive to business. As she was nearing the gate at Foxwood Court, she met Mr. Smith sauntering along, apparently out for an airing.

"Good afternoon, madam!"

He would have passed with the words, but she stopped to talk with him. The truth was, Miss Blake had taken, she knew not why or wherefore, a liking for Mr. Smith. From the first moment she saw him he had possessed a kind of attraction for her. It must be said that she believed him to be a gentleman.

"You were not at the opening service at St. Jerome's this afternoon, Mr. Smith?" she said, half reproachfully.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I thought I should be out of place there, as the congregation was comprised only of ladies," was his reply. "Happening to be walking that way, I saw lots of them go in."

"Foxwood cannot boast of gentlemen in the middle of the day; they are off to Basham for their different occupations. But you are an idle man, Mr. Smith."

"I am not always idle, I assure you, Miss Blake. I have Sir Karl Andinnian's interests to look to."

"Oh, indeed! As a friend, I presume?"

"Just so."

"Well, you would not have been quite solitary if you had come in. Mr. Moore was there."

"Ay. He looked in for five minutes, and came out laughing. I don't know what amused him, unless it was to see the Misses Sumnor there."

"I think you must have been watching us all—all who went in, and all who came out," said Miss Blake. The agent smiled as he disclaimed the imputation: and with that they parted.

"Those flowers were so much admired and appreciated, Maclean," said Miss Blake to the gardener as she passed the lodge—where he sat at tea with his wife—the door open. "There are no such hot-house flowers anywhere as yours."

Maclean, a short man with a fresh colour, rose and thanked her for the compliment. She passed rapidly on, and entered the house by the window of the north room.

"I wonder where Lucy is?—Dressing, perhaps; or seated at the window looking out for her husband. Foolish child! Does he deserve that love?"

Treading softly on the carpeted staircase, her knock at Lady Andinnian's door and her entrance were simultaneous. Lucy, in her white morning dress with its blue ribbons, was standing up beside her husband. His arm was round her waist, her face lay upon his breast, his own bent down upon it.

It was an awkward moment for Miss Blake; she bit her lips as she stammered an apology. Lucy, blushing and laughing, drew away. Karl stood his ground, laughing too.

"I did not know you had returned, Sir Karl."

"I have just come: three minutes ago," he said, holding out his hand. "Lucy was telling me you had gone to a kettle-drum, and I saucily assured her she must have dreamt it. Fancy kettle-drums at Foxwood!"

They separated for the purpose of dressing, Miss Blake biting her lips still as she went to her room. The little matter had turned her blood hot and cold. Do as she would, she could not get rid entirely of her love for Karl Andinnian, in spite of the chronic resentment she indulged towards him.

"If this is jealousy," she murmured, sitting down to think, and undoing her veil with fingers that thrilled to their extreme ends, "I must indeed school myself. I thought I had learned to bear calmly."

At dinner Sir Karl seemed in better spirits than usual. He told them he had been to the Opera to hear the new singer, Ilma de Murska, in "Robert le Diable."

"Oh, Karl!—and not to have had me with you!" cried Lucy.

"I will take you up on purpose, Lucy. You must hear her. In the song 'Robert, toi que j'aime' she electrified us all. I never heard anything like it in my life. And she is most elegant on the stage. Her dresses are splendid."

"Was any one there that you knew?"

"I hardly looked at the house at all. I was in the stalls. The Prince and Princess of Wales were in the royal box."

"I am sure, Karl, it is a wonder to hear that you went!"

"True, Lucy; but my evenings hung heavily on my hands. What with Plunkett and Plunkett and other business matters, the days were busy enough: I used to wish the evenings were. I felt very dull."

"Just as I have been feeling here, Karl, without you."

His answer to his wife was but a look; but Miss Blake wished she had not caught it. What had she done, that his love should have missed her to be lavished on this girl-child?

"Sir Karl," she cried, somewhat abruptly, "who is Mr. Smith?"

"I don't know," carelessly replied Sir Karl, whose thoughts were preoccupied.

"Not know! But is he not your agent? and a friend also?"

Sir Karl was fully aroused now. "Know who Mr. Smith is?" he repeated—and he wished to heaven in his secret heart that he did

know. "How do you mean, Miss Blake? He is Mr. Smith, and—yes—a kind of agent to me on the estate."

The latter part of the answer was given lightly, half merrily, as if he would pass it off with a laugh. Miss Blake resumed.

"Is he not an old friend of the Andinnian family?"

"Of some of them, I believe. I did not know him myself."

"Who gave him his appointment?"

"My mother. She considered it well to have some responsible person here to look after my interests, as I was living abroad."

"Do you not intend, Sir Karl, to make an acquaintance of him?—a friend?"

For a moment Sir Karl's brows were heavily knitted. "I do not suppose I shall," he quietly said.

"He seems a well-informed, agreeable man; and is, I conclude, a gentleman," returned Miss Blake, quite in a tone of remonstrance.

"I am glad to hear it," replied Sir Karl, his manner somewhat freezing. "And so, Lucy, you have had some of the neighbours calling here?" he continued, addressing his wife and turning the conversation.

"Oh, Karl, yes! And you were not here to help me; and I did not know them, and confused their names hopelessly one with another."

"I should not have known them either," laughed Sir Karl.

Miss Blake had some letters to write, and got to them after dinner: she had been too much engaged with other things during the day. Tea was taken in early to the drawing-room, and afterwards she went back to her own room to finish her writing by what little light remained. She saw Sir Karl and Lucy in the garden arm-in-arm, conversing together in low confidential tones. Evidently they were all-sufficient for each other and did not miss her.

Say what we will, it could but seem to Miss Blake a neglect and something worse, looking upon past matters in her own light; and it told upon her cruelly.

The evening dusk drew on. She heard Lucy at the piano in the drawing-room, seemingly alone, trying a bit of one song and a bit of another. There was no doubt that she thought Theresa was still busy and would not interrupt her. Miss Blake put up her desk and sat at the open window. By and by, when it was nearly dark, she threw a shawl on her shoulders, stepped out, crossed the lawn, and lost herself amidst the opposite trees. Miss Blake was that night in no mood for companionship: she preferred her own company to that of Lucy or her husband. As we say by the cross little children, the black dog was on her back; she did not listen even to the sweet melody of the nightingales.

"But for St. Jerome's I would not stay another day here," ran her thoughts. "I almost wish now I had not stirred in the church matter but let the benighted place alone. As it is—and Mr. Cattacomb's come

—why, I must make the best of it, and do my duty. Stay! Stay, Theresa Blake!" she broke off in self-soliloquising sternness. "Is this fulfilling your good resolution—to give up all, and bear all? Let me put away such evil thoughts and work bravely on, and stay here cheerfully for Lucy's sake. It may be that she will want a friend, and I—Oh, there he is!"

The last sentence related to Sir Karl. She had gradually got round the house to the other side, which brought her in face of Sir Karl's room. The doors of the window stood wide open; a lamp was on the table, by whose light he seemed to be reading a note and talking to Hewitt, who stood near. Crossing over on the soft grass she drew within ear-shot, not really with any intention of listening, but in her mind's abstraction—what was there likely to pass between Sir Karl and his servant that concerned her to hear? With the bright lamp inside and the darkness out, they could not see her.

"You must be very cautious, Hewitt," Sir Karl was saying. "Implicitly silent."

"I have been, sir, and shall be," was the answer. "There's no fear of me. I have not had the interests of the family at heart all these years, Sir Karl, to compromise them now."

"I know, I know, Hewitt. Well, that's all, I think, for to-night."

Miss Blake passed back again out of hearing, very slowly and thoughtfully. She *had* heard the words, and was dissecting them: it almost sounded as though Sir Karl and his man had some secret together. Stepping on to the terrace, she was about to go in, when she heard Sir Karl enter the drawing-room and speak to his wife.

"I think I shall take a bit of a stroll, Lucy."

"To smoke your cigar? Do so, Karl."

"I—wonder—whether it is an excuse to go where he went the other night?" thought Miss Blake, the idea striking her like a flash of lightning. "I'll watch him. I will. I said I would, and I will. His family may have interests of their own, but Lucy and her family have theirs, and for her sake I'll watch."

Drawing the shawl over her head, she passed out at one of the small gates, crossed the road, and glided along under cover of the opposite hedge as far as the Maze. There she stood, back amidst the trees, and sheltered from observation. The dress she wore happened to be black, the shawl was black, and she could not be seen in the shade.

It was a still night. The dew was rising, and there seemed to be some damp exhaled from the trees. The time passed, ever so many minutes, and she began to think she had come on a fruitless errand. Or was it that Sir Karl was only lingering with his wife?

"Good gracious! What was that?"

A shrill shriek right over Miss Blake's head had caused the words and the start. It must have been only a night bird; but her nerves—

what few she had—were on the tension, and she began to tremble slightly. It was not a pleasant position, and she wished herself away.

"I'll go," she mentally cried. "I wish I had not come. I—hope—Mr. Smith's—not looking out, or he will see me!" she added, slowly and dubiously.

The doubt caused her to stay where she was and strain her eyes at the opposite cottage. Was it fancy? One of the windows stood open, and she thought she saw a head and eyes peeping from it. Peeping, not openly looking.

"He must have seen me come!" decided Miss Blake. "But surely he'd not know me, wrapped up like this! Hark!"

A very slight sound had dawned upon her ear. Was it Sir Karl advancing? Surely the sound was that of footsteps! At the same moment, there arose another and separate sound; and that was close to her, inside the gates by which she stood.

"Some one must be coming out!" breathed Miss Blake. "It's getting complicated. I wish I was safe away. Two pairs of eyes may see what one would not."

Sir Karl Andinnian—for the footsteps were his—advanced. Very quietly and cautiously. Miss Blake could see that he had changed his dress coat for another, which he had got buttoned closely round him, though the night was close. Halting at the gate he drew the key from his pocket as before, unlocked it, and passed in. Some one met him.

"Karl! I am so glad you have come! I thought you would! I knew you had returned."

It was a soft, sweet voice: the same voice, Miss Blake could have laid a wager on it, that had sung "When lovely woman stoops to folly." Their hands met: she was sure of that. Perhaps their lips also: but she could not see.

"Why, how did you know I was back?" he asked.

"Oh, Ann came to the gate to answer a ring, and saw you pass from the station."

"Why are you out here?" he resumed. "Is it prudent?"

"I was restless, expecting you. I have so much to say; and, do you know, Karl——"

The voice sank into too low a tone to be audible to the thirsty ears outside. Both had spoken but in whispers. Miss Blake cautiously stretched forth her head, so as to get a glimpse through the closely-barred gate. Yes: it was the lovely girl she had seen during that stealthy visit of hers: and she had taken Sir Karl's arm while she talked to him. Another minute, and they both disappeared within the trees of the maze.

Whether Miss Blake was glued to the trunk of the tree she stood at, or whether it was glued to her, remains a problem to be solved. It was one of the two. There she stood; and, leave it she could not. That

the flood-gates of a full tide of iniquity had suddenly been opened upon her was as clear to her mind as the light of day. Much that had been incomprehensible in the Maze and its inmates admitted of no doubt now. An instinct of this had been playing in her fancy previously: but she had driven it away *as* fancy, and would not allow herself to dwell on it. And now—it seemed as though she stood at the edge of a yawning precipice looking down on a gulf of almost unnatural evil, from the midst of which Sir Karl Andinnian shone prominently out, the incarnation of all that was wicked and false and treacherous. But for the necessity of stillness and silence, Miss Blake could have groaned aloud.

A few minutes, and she stole away. There was nothing to wait or watch for: she knew all. Forgetting about Clematis Cottage and the eyes that might be peeping from it, she got back into the grounds of Foxwood and sat down on the bare terrace in the night, to commune with herself. What should her course be? Surely she ought to impart the secret to that poor girl, Lucy, whom the man had dared to make his wife.

Let us render justice to Miss Blake. Hard though she was by nature, she strove to do her duty in all conscientiousness at all times and in all places. Sin she detested, no matter of what nature; detested it both *as* sin and for its offence against God. That Sir Karl Andinnian was living in secret, if not open sin, and was cruelly deceiving his innocent and unsuspecting wife, was clearly indisputable. It must not be allowed to go on—at least so far as Lucy was concerned. To allow her to remain the loving and unsuspecting partner of this man would be almost like making her a third in the wickedness, was what Miss Blake thought in her anger. And she decided on her course.

"And I—if I did not enlighten her, knowing what I know—should be countenancing and administering to the sin," she said aloud. "Good heavens! what a pit seems to be around us! May I be helped to do right!"

Rising and shaking the night-dew from her hair, she passed upstairs to her own chamber. Lady Andinnian was moving about her dressing-room. Impulse induced Miss Blake to knock at the door. Not that she intended to speak then.

"Are you undressing, Lucy?" she asked, an unconscious pity in her voice for the poor young wife.

"Not yet, Theresa. Aglaë's coming up, though, I think. It was dull down stairs by myself, and I thought I might as well come on. I could not find you anywhere. I thought you must have gone to bed."

"I was out of doors."

"Were you! I called to you outside on the terrace, but no one answered."

"Sir Karl is out, then?"

"He is strolling about somewhere," replied Lucy. "He does not sleep well, and likes to take half an hour's stroll the last thing. It strikes me sometimes that Karl's not strong, Theresa: but I try to throw the fear off."

Miss Blake drew in her lips, biting them to an enforced silence. She was burning to say what she could say, but knew it would be premature.

"I will wish you good-night, Lucy, my dear. I am tired, and—and out of sorts."

"Good-night, Theresa: *dormez bien*," was the gay answer.

"To waste her love and solicitude upon *him*!" thought Miss Blake, as she stepped along the corridor with erect head and haughty brow. "I told Colonel Cleeve before the marriage that he was wild—little Dennet had said so—but I was put down. No wonder Sir Karl cannot spend his income on his home! he has other ways and means for it. Oh, how true are the words of holy writ! 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.'"

CHAPTER XV.

REVEALED TO LADY ANDINNIAN.

THE morning sun had chased away the dew on the grass, but the hedge-rows were giving out their fragrance, and the lark and blackbird sang in the trees, as Miss Blake was returning from early service at St. Jerome's: or, as St. Jerome's people called it, *Matins*.

In spite of the nearly sleepless night she had passed, Miss Blake looked well. Her superabundance of hair, freshly washed up with its cunning cosmetics and adorned to perfection, gleamed as if so many golden particles of dust were shining on it; her morning robe was of light muslin, and becoming as fashion could make it. It was very unusual for Miss Blake to get little sleep: she was of too equable a temperament to lie awake: but the previous night's revelation had disturbed her in no common degree, and her head had ached when she rose. The headache was passing now, and she felt quite ready for breakfast. A task lay before her that day: the disclosure to Lady Andinnian. It was all cut and dried: how she should make it: even the very words of it were already framed.

She would not so much as turn her eyes on the gate of the Maze: had she been on that side of the road she would have caught up her flounces as she passed it. Never, willingly, would she soil her shoes with that side of the way again—the place had a brand on it. It was quite refreshing to turn her eyes on Clematis Cottage, sheltering the respectable single bachelor who lived there.

She turned them on the bachelor as well. Mr. Smith, in a light morning coat, and his arm as usual in a black sling, was out of doors amidst the rose trees on the little lawn, gazing at one of them through

his green spectacles. Miss Blake stopped as he saluted her, and good mornings were exchanged.

"I am no judge of flowers," he said, "have not lived among them enough for that; but it appears to me that this rose, just come out, is a very rare and beautiful specimen."

Obedying the evident wish—given in manner alone, not in words—that she should go in and look at the rose, Miss Blake entered. It was a tea-rose of exquisite tint and sweetness. Miss Blake was warm in her admiration; she had not noticed any exactly like it at the Court. Before she could stop the sacrilege Mr. Smith had opened his penknife, cut off the rose, and was presenting it to her.

"Oh, how could you!" she exclaimed. "It was so beautiful here, in your garden."

"Madam, it will be more beautiful there," he rejoined, as she began to put it in her waistband.

"I should be very sorry, but that I see other buds will soon be out."

"Yes, by to-morrow: Earth does not deal out her flowers to us with a niggardly hand."

Accompanying the resolution Miss Blake had come to the previous evening and perfected in the night—in her eyes a very righteous and proper resolution, namely, to disclose what she knew to Lady Andinnian—accompanying this, I say, was an undercurrent of determination to discover as many particulars of the ill-savoured matter as she possibly could discover. Standing at this moment on Mr. Smith's grass-plot, that gentleman beside her and the gates of the Maze in full view opposite, an idea struck Miss Blake that perhaps he knew something.

She began to question him. Lightly and apparently carelessly, interspersed with observations about the flowers, she turned the conversation on the Maze, asking this, and remarking that.

"Lonely it must be for Mrs. Grey? Oh yes. How long has she lived there, Mr. Smith?"

"She came—let me see. Shortly, I think, before Mrs. Andinnian's death."

"Ah, yes. At the time Sir Karl was staying here."

"Was Sir Karl staying here? By the way, yes, I think he was."

Miss Blake, toying with a spray of the flourishing clematis, happened to look suddenly at Mr. Smith as he gave the answer, and saw his glance turned covertly on her through his green glasses. "He knows all about it," she thought, "and is screening Sir Karl. That last answer, the pretended non-remembrance, was an evasion." Just for a moment there was a silence.

"Mr. Smith, you may trust me," she then said in a low tone. "I fancy that you and I both know pretty well who it was brought the

lady here and why she lives in that seclusion. But I could never have believed it of Sir Karl Andinnian."

Mr. Smith in his surprise—and it looked like very genuine surprise—took off his glasses and gazed at Miss Blake without them. He had rather fine brown eyes, she noticed. Not a word spoke he.

"You wonder that I should speak of this, Mr. Smith—I see that."

"I don't understand you, ma'am, and that's the truth."

"Oh, well, I suppose you will not understand. Sir Karl ought to be ashamed of himself."

Whether it was her tart tone that suddenly enlightened Mr. Smith, or whether he had but been 'pretending before, there could be no mistake that he caught her meaning now. He put on his green spectacles with a conscious laugh.

"Hush," said he, making believe playfully to hide his face. "We are content, you know, Miss Blake, to ignore these things."

"Yes, I do know it, dear sir: it is the way of the world. But they cannot be ignored in the sight of heaven."

The striking of nine o'clock inside the house reminded Miss Blake that the morning was getting on, and that she had best make haste if she wanted any breakfast. Mr. Smith held the gate open for her, and shook her offered hand. She stepped onwards, feeling that a mutual, if silent, understanding had been established between them—that they shared the disgraceful secret.

Had Miss Blake wanted confirmation in her belief, this would have established it. But she did not. She was as sure of the fact as though an angel had revealed it. The sight of her own good eyes, the hearing of her true ears, and the exercise of her keen common sense had established it too surely.

"My task lies all plain before me," she murmured. "It is a disagreeable one, and may prove a thankless, but I will not shrink from it. Who am I that I should turn aside from an appointed duty? That it *has* been appointed me, events show. I have been guided in this by a higher power than my own."

An appointed duty! Perhaps Miss Blake thought she had been "appointed" to watch the Maze gates in the shade of the dark night, to track the private steps of her unsuspecting host, Karl Andinnian! There is no sophistry in this world like self-sophistry; nothing else so deceives the human heart.

Miss Blake found her opportunity in the course of the morning. A shade of pity crossed her for the happiness she was about to mar, as she saw them out together after breakfast, amid the flowers. Now Lucy's arm entwined fondly in his, now tripping by his side, now calling his attention to some rare or sweet blossom, as Mr. Smith had called Miss Blake's in the morning. In Lucy's bright face, as she glanced perpetually at her lord and husband, there was so much of love, so

much of trust: and in his, Sir Karl's, there was a whole depth of apparent tenderness for her.

"Men were deceivers ever," angrily cried Miss Blake, recalling a line of the old ballad. "It's enough to make one sick. But I am sorry for Lucy; it will be a dreadful blow. How I wish it could be inflicted on him instead of her. In a measure it will fall on him—for of course Lucy will take active steps."

Later, when Sir Karl, as it chanced, had gone over to Basham, and Lucy was in her pretty little dressing-room, writing to some girl friend, Miss Blake seized on the opportunity. Shutting herself in with Lady Andinnian she made the communication to her. She told it with as much gentle consideration as possible, very delicately, and, in fact, rather obscurely. At first Lady Andinnian did not understand, could not understand; and when she was made to understand, her burning face flashed forth its indignation, and she utterly refused to believe.

Miss Blake only expected this. She was very soothing and tender.

"Sit down, Lucy," she said. "Listen. On my word of honour, I would not have imparted this miserable tale to inflict on you pain so bitter, but that I saw it *must* be done. For your sake, and in the interests of everything that's right and just and seemly, it would not have done to suffer you to remain in ignorance, a blind victim to the dastardly deceit practised on you by your husband."

"He could not so deceive me, Theresa; he could not deceive any one," she burst forth passionately.

"My dear, I only ask you to listen. You can then judge for yourself. Do not take my word that it is, or must be, so. Hear the facts, and then use your own common sense. Alas Lucy, there can be no mistake: but for knowing that, should I have spoken, think you? It is, unfortunately, as true as heaven."

From the beginning to the end, Miss Blake told her tale. She spoke out without reticence now. Sitting beside Lucy on the sofa, and holding her hands in hers with a warm and loving clasp, she went over it all. The mystery that appeared to encompass this young lady, living alone at the Maze in strict seclusion with her two old servants, who were man and wife, she spoke of first as an introduction. She said how curiously it had attracted her attention, unaccountably to herself at the time, but that *now* she knew a divine inspiration had guided her to the instinct. She avowed how she had got in, and that it was done purposely; and that she had seen the girl, who was called Mrs. Grey, and was "beautiful as an angel," and heard her sing the characteristic song (which might well indeed have been written of *her*) "When lovely woman stoops to folly." Next, she described Sir Karl's secret visits; the key he let himself in with, taken from his pocket; the familiar and affectionate words interchanged between him and the girl, who had come to the gate to wait for him. She told Lucy that she

had afterwards had corroborative evidence from Mr. Smith, the agent : he appeared to know all about it, to take it as a common matter of course, and to be content to ignore it after the custom of the world. She said that Sir Karl had brought Mrs. Grey to the Maze during the time he was staying at Foxwood in attendance on his sick mother : and she asked Lucy to recal the fact of his prolonged sojourn here, of his unwillingness to leave it and rejoin her, his wife ; and of the very evident desire he had had to keep her altogether from Foxwood. In short, as Miss Blake put the matter—and every syllable she spoke did she believe to be strictly true and unexaggerated—it was simply impossible for the most unwilling listener not to be convinced.

Lady Andinnian was satisfied : and it was as her death blow. Truth itself could not have appeared more plain and certain. After the first outburst of indignation, she had sat very calm and quiet, listening silently. Trifles excite the best of us, but in a great calamity heart and self alike shrink into stillness. Save that she had turned pale as death, there was no sign.

"Lucy, my poor Lucy, forgive me ! I would have spared you if I could : but I believe the task of telling you was *laid* on me."

"Thank you, yes ; I suppose it was right to tell me, Theresa," came the mechanical answer from the quivering lips.

"My dear, what will be your course ? You cannot remain here, his wife."

"Would you please let me be alone, now, Theresa ? I do not seem to be able to think yet collectedly."

The door closed on Miss Blake, and Lady Andinnian bolted it after her. She bolted the other two doors, so as to make sure of being alone. The abandonment began then. Kneeling on the carpet, her head buried on the sofa pillow, she lay realizing the full sense of the awful shock. It shook her to the centre. Oh, how dreadful it was ! She had so loved Karl, so believed in him : she had believed that man rarely loved a maiden and then a wife as Karl had loved her. This, then, must have been the secret trouble that was upon him !—which had all but induced him to break off his marriage ! she reasoned, and supposed she reasoned correctly. All parts of the supposition, had she thought them well out, might not perhaps have fitted-in to one another : but in a distress such as this, no woman—no, nor man either—is capable of working out problems logically. She assumed that it must have been going on for years : in all probability long before he knew her.

An hour or so of this painful indulgence, and then Lady Andinnian rose from the floor and sat down to think, as well as she could think, what her course should be. *She* was truly religious, though perhaps she knew it not. Theresa Blake was ostensibly so, and very much so in her own belief : but the difference was wide. The one had the real

gold, the other but the base coin washed over. She, Lucy, strove to think and to see what would be right and best to do ; for herself, for her misguided husband, and in the sight of God.

She sat and thought it out, perhaps for another hour. Aglaé came to the door to say luncheon was served, but Lady Andinnian said Miss Blake was to be told that she had a headache and should not take any. To make a scandal and leave her husband's home—as Theresa seemed to have hinted—would have gone well nigh to kill her with the shame and anguish it would entail. And oh, she hoped, she trusted, that her good father and mother, who had yielded to her love for Karl and so sanctioned the marriage, might never, never know of this. She lifted her imploring eyes and hands to heaven in prayer that it might be kept from them. She prayed that she might be enabled to do what was right, and to *bear*: to bear silently and patiently, no living being, save Sir Karl, knowing what she had to endure.

For, while she was praying for the way to be made clear before her, and for strength to walk in it, however thorny it might be, an idea had dawned upon her that this matter might possibly be kept from the world, held sacred between herself and Sir Karl. *Could* she? could she continue to live on at the Court, bearing in patient silence—nay, in impatient—the cruel torment, the sense of insult? And yet, if she did not remain, how would it be possible to conceal it all from her father and mother? The very indecision seemed well nigh to kill her.

Visitors drove up to the house in the course of the afternoon—the county people were beginning to call—and Lady Andinnian had to go down. Miss Blake was off to one of St. Jerome's services—of which the Reverend Guy Cattacomb was establishing several daily. Sir Karl came home while the visitors were there. After their departure, when he came to look round for his wife, he was told she had hastily thrown on bonnet and mantle and gone out. Sir Karl rather wondered.

Not only to avoid her husband, but also because she wanted to see Margaret Sumnor, and perhaps gain from her a crumb of comfort in her utter wretchedness, had Lady Andinnian run forth to gain the vicarage. Margaret was lying as before, on her hard couch, or board; doing, for a wonder, nothing. Her hands were clasped meekly before her on her white wrapper, her eyelids seemed heavy with crying. But the eyes smiled a cheerful greeting to Lady Andinnian.

"Is anything the matter, Margaret?"

It was but the old story, the old grievance ; Margaret Sumnor was pained by it, more or less, nearly every day of her life—the home treatment of her father: the contempt shown to him by his second family ; ay, and by his wife.

"It is a thing I cannot talk of much, Lucy. I should not speak of it

at all, but that it is well known to Foxwood, and talked of openly. Caroline and Martha set papa at naught in all ways : the insolence of their answers to him, both in words and manner, brings the blush of pain and shame to his face. This time the trouble was about that new place of Miss Blake's, St. Jerome's. Papa forbid them to frequent it ; but it was just as though he had spoken to a stone—in fact, worse ; for they retorted and set him at defiance. They wanted daily service, they said, and should go where it was held. So now papa, I believe, thinks of resuming his daily services here, at Trinity, hoping it may counteract the other. There, that's enough of home and my red eyes, Lucy. You don't look well."

Lady Andinnian drew her chair quite close to the invalid, so that she might let her hand rest in the one held out for her. "I have a trouble too, Margaret," she whispered. "A dreadful, sudden trouble, a blow ; and I think it has nearly broken my heart. I cannot tell you what it is ; I cannot tell any one in the world——"

"Except your husband," interposed Miss Sumnor. "Never have any concealments from him, Lucy."

Lady Andinnian's face turned red and white with embarrassment. "Yes, him ; I shall have to speak to him," she said, in some hesitation : and Miss Sumnor's deep insight into others' hearts enabled her to guess that the trouble had something to do with Sir Karl. She suspected it was that painful thing to a young wife—a first quarrel.

"I am not like you, Margaret—ever patient, ever good," faltered poor Lady Andinnian. "I seem to be nearly torn apart with conflicting thoughts—perhaps I ought to say passions—and I thought I would come to you for a word of advice and comfort. There are two ways in which I can act in this dreadful matter ; and indeed that word is no exaggeration, for it is very dreadful. The one would be to make a stir in it, take a high tone, and set forth my wrongs ; that would be revenge, and I hardly know whether it would be right, or bring right. The other would be to put up with the evil in silence, and *bear*, and leave the future to God. Which must I do?"

Margaret Sumnor turned as much as she could turn without assistance, and laid both her hands imploringly on Lady Andinnian's.

"Lucy ! Lucy ! choose the latter. I have seen, oh, so much of this revenge, and of how it has worked. My dear, I believe in my honest heart that this revenge was never yet taken but it was repented of in the end. However grave the justifying cause and cruel the provocation, the time would come when it was heartily and bitterly regretted, when its actor would say, Oh that I had not done as I did, that I had chosen the more merciful part ! 'Vengeance is mine ; I will repay ;' you know who says that, Lucy : but you cannot know what I have seen and marked so often—that when that vengeance is taken into human hands, it somehow defeats itself. It may inflict confusion and ruin on

he adversary ; but it never fails to tell in some way on the inflictor. It may be only in mental regret : regret that may not set in until after long years ; but rely upon it he never fails, in his remorseful heart, to wish the past could be undone. A regret such as this we have to carry with us to the grave, for it can never be remedied, the revengeful act cannot be blotted out. It has been done ; and it stands with its consequences for ever : consequences, perhaps, that we never could have foreseen."

Lady Andinnian sat listening with drooping face. A softer expression stole over it.

"There is one thing we never can repent of, Lucy ; and that is, of choosing the path of mercy—of leniency. It brings a balm with it to the sorely-chafed spirit, and heals in time. Do you choose it, my dear. I urge it on you with my whole heart."

"I think I will, Margaret ; I think I will," she answered, raising for a moment her wet eyes. "It will mortify my pride and my self-esteem ; be always mortifying them, and I shall need a great deal of patience to bear."

"But you will be able to bear ; to bear all ; you know where to go for help. Do this, Lucy ; and see if in the future you do not find your reward. In after years, it may be that your heart will go up with a great bound of joy and thankfulness. 'I did as Margaret told me,' you will say, 'and bore.' Oh, if men and women did but know the future that they lay up for themselves according as their acts shall be!—the remorse or the peace."

Lucy rose and kissed her. "It shall be so, Margaret," she whispered. And she went away without another word.

She strove to keep the best side uppermost in her mind as she went home. Her resolution was taken ; and, perhaps because it was taken, the temptation to act otherwise and to choose revenge, rose up in all manner of attractive colours. She could abandon her ill-doing husband and start even that night, for her parents' home ; reveal the whole and claim their protection against him. This would be to uphold her pride and her womanly self-respect : but oh, how it would pain them ! And they had given their consent to the marriage against their better judgment ; so to say, against their own will. No ; she could not, for very shame, tell them, and she prayed again that they might never know it.

"I *can* take all the pain upon myself and bear it without sign for their sakes," she mentally cried. "Oh yes, and for mine, for the exposure would kill me. I *can* bear this ; I must take it up as my daily and nightly cross ; but I could not bear that my own dear father and mother, or the dear friends of my girlhood, should know he is faithless to me—that he never could have loved me. Theresa, the only one, will be silent for my sake."

She had believed Karl Andinnian to be one of the few good men of

the earth ; she had made him her idol ; all had seen it. To let them know that the idol had fallen from his pedestal, and *so* fallen, would reflect its slighting disgrace on her, and be more than human nature could encounter.

Her interview with Sir Karl took place that evening. She had managed, save at dinner, to avoid his presence until then. It was held in her dressing-room at the dusk hour. He came up to know why she stayed there alone and what she was doing. In truth, she had been schooling herself for this very interview, which had to be got over before she went to rest. The uncertainty of what she could say was troubling her, even the very words she should use caused her perplexity. In her innate purity, her sensitively-refined nature, she could not bring herself to speak openly to her husband upon topics of this unpleasant kind. That rendered the explanation more incomplete and complicated than it would otherwise have been. He had come up, and she nerved herself to the task. As good enter on it now as an hour later.

"I—I want to speak to you, Sir Karl."

He was standing by the open window, and turned his head quickly. Sir Karl ! "What's amiss, Lucy ?" he asked.

"I—I—I know all about your secret at the Maze," she said with a great burst of emotion, her chest heaving, her breath coming in gasps.

Sir Karl started as though he had been shot. His very lips turned of an ashy whiteness.

"Lucy ! You cannot know it !"

"Heaven knows I do," she answered. "I have learnt it all this day. Oh, how could you so deceive me ?"

Sir Karl's first act was to dart to the door that opened on the corridor and bolt it. He then opened the two doors leading to the chambers on either side, looked to see that no one was in either of them, shut the doors again, and bolted them.

"Sir Karl, this has nearly killed me."

"Hush !" he breathed. "Don't talk of it aloud, for the love of God !"

"Why did you marry me ?" she asked.

"Why, indeed," he retorted, his voice one of sad pain. "I have reproached myself enough for it since, Lucy."

She was silent. The answer angered her ; and she had need of all her best strength, the strength she had so prayed for, to keep her lips from a cruel answer. She sat in her low dressing chair, gazing at him with reproachful eyes.

He said no more just then. Well-nigh overwhelmed with the blow, he stood back against the window-frame, his arms folded, his face one of pitiful anguish. Lucy, his wife, had got hold of the dreadful secret

that was destroying his own peace, and that he had been so cunningly planning to conceal.

"How did you learn it?" he asked.

"I shall never tell you," she answered with quiet firmness, resolved not to make mischief by betraying Theresa. "I know it, and that is enough. Put it down, if you choose, that it was revealed to me by accident—or that I guessed it."

"But, Lucy, it is necessary I should know."

"I have spoken, Sir Karl. I will never tell you."

The evening breeze came wafting into that room of pain; cooling, it might be, their fevered brows, though they were not conscious of it. Lady Andinnian resumed.

"The unpardonable deceit you practised on my father and mother——"

Sir Karl's start of something like horror interrupted her. "They must never know it, Lucy. In mercy to us all, you must join with me in concealing it from them."

"It was very wicked in you to have concealed it from them at all. At least, to have married me *with* such a secret—for I conclude you could not have really dared to tell them. They deserved better at your hands. I was their only daughter: all they had to love."

"Yes, it was wrong. I have reproached myself since worse than you can reproach me. But I did not know the worst then."

She turned from him proudly. "I—I wanted to tell you, Sir Karl, that I for one will never forgive or forget your falsehood and deceit; and, what I am about to say, I say for my father and mother's sake. I will keep it from them, always if I can; I will bury it within my own breast, and remain on here in your home, your ostensible wife. I had thought of leaving your house for theirs, never to return; but the exposure it would bring frightened me; and, in truth, I shrink from the scandal."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "My 'ostensible' wife?"

"I shall never be your wife again in reality. That can be your room"—pointing to the one they had jointly occupied; "this one is mine," indicating the chamber on the other hand. "Aglæ has already taken my things into it."

Sir Karl stood gazing at her, lost in surprise.

"No one but ourselves need know of this," she resumed, her eyes dropping before the tender, pitiful gaze of his. "The arrangements are looked upon by Aglaé as a mere matter of convenience in the hot weather; the servants will understand it as such. I would spare us both gossip. For your sake and for mine I am proposing this medium course—to avoid the scandal that otherwise must ensue. I shall have to bear, Karl—to bear—" her heart nearly failed her in its bitter grief—"but it will be better than a public separation."

"You *cannot* mean what you say," he exclaimed. "Live apart from me! The cause cannot justify it."

"It scarcely becomes you to say this. Have you forgotten the sin?" she added in a whisper.

"The sin? Well, of course it was sin—crime, rather. But that is of the past."

She thought she understood what he wished to imply, and bit her lips to keep down their bitter words. He was surely treating her as the veriest child, striving to hood-wink her still! That he was agitated almost beyond control, she saw: and did not wonder at.

"The sin is past," he repeated. "No need to recal it or talk of it."

"Be it so," she scornfully said. "Its results remain. *This*, I presume, was the great secret you spoke of the night before our marriage."

"It was. And you see now, Lucy, why I did not dare to speak more openly. I grant that it would have been enough to prevent our marriage, had you then so willed it: but, being my wife, it is not any sufficient cause for you to separate yourself from me."

"I am the best judge of that. Not sufficient cause! I wonder you dare say it. It is an outrage on all the proprieties of life. You must bring—them—to the Maze here, close to your roof and mine!"

In her shrinking reticence, she would not mention to him the girl in plain words; she would not even say "her," but substituted the term "them," as though speaking of Mrs. Grey and her servants collectively. Sir Karl's answer was a hasty one.

"That was not my doing. The coming to the Maze was the greatest mistake ever made. I was powerless to help it."

Again she believed she understood. That when Sir Karl had wished to shake off certain trammels, he found himself not his own master in the matter, and could not.

"And so you submitted?" she scornfully said.

"I had no other choice, Lucy."

"And you pay your visits there!"

"Occasionally. I cannot do otherwise."

"Does it never occur to you to see that public exposure may come?" she continued in the same contemptuous tone. For the time, Lucy Andinnian's sweet nature seemed wholly changed. Every feeling she possessed had risen up against the bitter insult thrust upon her—and Sir Karl seemed to be meeting it in a coolly insulting spirit.

"The fear of exposure is killing me, Lucy," he breathed, his chest heaving with its painful emotion. "I have been less to blame than you imagine. Let me tell you the story from the beginning, and you will see that——"

"I will not hear a word of it," burst forth Lucy. "It is not a thing that should be told to me. At any rate, I will not hear it."

"As you please, of course; I cannot force it on you. My life was

thorny enough before : I never thought that, even if the matter came to your knowledge, you would take it up in this cruel manner and add to my pain and perplexity."

"It is for the Maze that we have to be economical here ! " she rejoined, partly as a question, her hand laid on her rebellious bosom.

"Yes, yes. You see, Lucy, in point of fact——"

"I see nothing but what I do see. I wish to see no further."

Sir Karl looked searchingly at her, as though he could not understand. Could this be his own loving, gentle Lucy ? It was indeed difficult to think so.

"In a day or two when you shall have had time to recover from the blow, Lucy—and a blow I acknowledge it to be—you will, I hope, judge me more leniently. You are my wife and I will not give you up : there is no real cause for it. When you shall be calmer you may feel sorry for some things you have said now."

"Sir Karl, listen ; and take your choice. I will stay on in your home on the terms I have mentioned, and they shall be perfectly understood and agreed to by both of us ; or I will leave it for the protection of my father. In the latter case I shall have to tell him why. It is for you to choose."

"Have you well weighed what your telling would involve ?"

"Yes ; exposure : and it is that I wish to avoid. If it has to come, it will be your fault. The choice lies with you. My decision is unalterable."

Sir Karl Andinnian wiped his brow of the fever-drops, gathered there. It was a bitter moment : and he considered that his wife was acting with most bitter harshness. But no alternative was left him, for he dared not risk exposure and its awful consequences.

And so that was the decision. They were to live on, enemies, under the same roof-top : or, at best, not friends. The interview lasted longer ; but no more explicit explanation took place between them : and when they parted they parted under a mutual and total misapprehension which neither of the two knew or suspected. Misapprehension had existed throughout the interview—and was to exist. It was one of those miserable cases that now and then occur in the world—a mutual misunderstanding, for which no one is to blame. Sometimes it is never set right on this side the grave.

Her heart was aching just as much as his. She loved him passionately, and she was calming down from her anger to a softer mood, such as parting always brings. "Will you not send the—the people away ?" she whispered in a last word, and with a burst of grief.

"If I can I will," was his answer. "I am hemmed in, Lucy, by all kinds of untoward perplexities, and I cannot do as I would. Good-night. I never could have believed you would take it up like this."

They shook hands and parted. The affair had been at last amicably arranged, so to say; and the separation was begun.

And so Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian were henceforth divided, and the household knew it not.

Miss Blake did not suspect a word of it. She saw no signs of any change—for outwardly Sir Karl and his wife were civil and courteous to each other as usual, meeting at meals, present together in daily intercourse. After a few days Miss Blake questioned Lady Andinnian.

"Surely you have not been so foolishly soft as to condone that matter, Lucy?"

But Lucy wholly refused to satisfy her. Nay, she smiled, and as good as tacitly let Miss Blake suppose that she might have been soft and foolish. Not even to her, or to any other living being, would Lucy betray what was sacred between herself and her husband.

"I am content to let it rest, Theresa: and I must request that you will do the same. Sir Karl and I both wish it."

Miss Blake caught in the smile and the gently evasive words, and was struck mute at Lucy's sin and folly. She quite thought she ought to have an atonement offered up for her at St. Jerome's. Surely Eve was not half so frail and foolish when she took the apple!

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT AT THE MAZE.

THE Maze was an old-fashioned, curious house inside, full of angles and passages and nooks and corners. Its rooms were small, and not many in number, the principal ones being fitted up with dark mahogany wainscoting. The windows were all casement windows with the exception of two: into those, modern sashes of good size had been placed by the late owner and occupant, Mr. Throcton. At Mr. Throcton's death the property was put up for sale and was bought by Sir Joseph Andinnian, furniture and all, just as it stood. Or, it may rather be said, was bought by Lady Andinnian; for the whim was hers. Just after the purchase had been entirely completed, Lady Andinnian sickened and died. Sir Joseph, ill at the time, did nothing whatever with the new place; so that on his death it came into the possession of his heirs in exactly the same state as when it was purchased. They let it be also, and it remained shut up. According to what Mr. Smith informed Miss Blake—and he was in the main correct, though not quite—Mrs. Grey had come to it and taken possession while Mrs. Andinnian lay ill at Foxwood and her son Karl was in attendance on her. But the little fable the agent had made use of—that he had gone over to the Maze to receive the premium from Mrs. Grey on taking possession—had no foundation in fact. He had certainly gone to the Maze and seen the lady called Mrs. Grey, but not to receive a premium, for she paid none.

The two rooms into which sash windows had been placed were—the one that faced Miss Blake when she had penetrated to the confines of the Maze on that unlucky day, and within which she had seen the unconscious Mrs. Grey; and the one above it. Into this upper one the reader must pay a nightly visit. It was used as a sitting-room. The same dark mahogany wainscoting lined the walls as in the room below, the furniture was dark and heavy-looking; and, in spite of the sultry heat of the night, the shutters were closed before the window and dull crimson curtains of damask wool were drawn across them. There was nothing bright in the appendages of the room, save the lighted lamp on the table and a crystal vase of hot-house flowers.

Seated at the table at work—the making of an infant's frock—was Mrs. Grey. Opposite to her, in the space between the table and the fire-place, sat Sir Karl; and by her side, facing him—Adam Andinnian.

It is more than probable that this will be no surprise; that the reader has already divined the truth of the secret, and all the miserable complication it had brought and was bringing in its train. It was not Adam Andinnian who had died in that fatal scuffle off Portland Island—or, more strictly speaking, off Weymouth—but one of the others who had been concerned in it.

Yes, there he sat, in life and in health; his speech as free, his white and beautiful teeth not less conspicuous than of yore—Sir Adam Andinnian. Karl, sitting opposite with his grave, sad face, was not in reality Sir Karl, and never had been.

But Adam Andinnian was altered. The once fine black hair, which it had used to please him to wear long in the neck, was now short, scanty, and turned to grey; his once fine fresh colour had given place to pallor, and he was growing a beard that looked grey and stubbly. Decidedly old-looking now, as compared to the past, was Adam Andinnian. He wore evening dress: just as though he had been attired for a dinner party—say—at Foxwood Court. Mrs. Grey—as she was called, though she was in reality Lady Andinnian—wore a summer dress of clear white muslin, through which might be seen her white neck and arms. It was the pleasure of her husband, Sir Adam, that in the evening, when only he dared to come out of his hiding-shell, they should keep up, in attire at least, some semblance of the state that ought to have been theirs.

"I can tell you, Karl, that I don't approve of it," Sir Adam was saying, with all his old haughty bearing and manner. "It's a regular scandal. What business has any one to set up such a thing on my land?"

"It's Truefit's land for the time being, you know, Adam. He gave the consent."

"A parcel of foolish people—be-vanities boys of self-called priests,

and be-fooled girls, running and racing to the place four or five times a day under pretence of worship!" continued Sir Adam, getting up to pace the room in his excitement, as though he would have burst through its small confines. "I won't permit it, Karl."

He seemed to have got somewhat shorter and his walk had a limp in it. But he was the same hasty, fiery Adam Andinnian. A man cannot well change his nature.

"I do not see how it is to be prevented," was Karl's answer. "It will not do, in our position, to raise a stir over anything, or to make enemies. I daresay it will bring itself to an end in some way or other."

"The whole parish is making fun of it, I find: Ann hears it talked of when she goes on errands. And it is a downright insult on Mr. Sumnor. What a curious-minded person that Miss Blake must be! Rose"—Sir Adam halted close to his wife—"if ever you put your foot inside this St. Jerome's, I'll not forgive you."

She lifted her eyes to his from the baby's frock. "I am not likely to go to it, Adam."

"The empty-headed creatures that girls are now-a-days! If bull-baiting came up, they'd run off to it, just as readily as the good girls of former days would run from any approach of evil to take shelter under their mother's wing. Does your wife frequent St. Jerome's, Karl?"

"Oh no."

"She shows her sense."

Karl Andinnian smiled. "You have not lost the old habit, Adam—the putting yourself into a heat for nothing. I came over this evening to have some serious talk with you. Do sit down."

"Yes do, Adam," added his wife, turning to him; "you will get the pain in your hip again. Do you wish me to go away?" she added to Karl, as she prepared to gather up her working materials.

"No, no, Rose: it's only the old story, I know—the wanting to get rid of me," interposed Sir Adam, sitting down himself. "Stay where you are, wife. Now for it, Karl.—Wait a moment, though," he added, ringing the bell.

It was answered by the same staid, respectable-looking servant seen by Miss Blake; the same confidential woman who had lived with Mrs. Andinnian at Weymouth—Ann Hopley.

"Ann, I am as thirsty as a fish," said her master. "Bring up a bottle of soda water and a dash of brandy."

"Yes, sir," she replied—not daring, now or at any other time, to give him his title.

He opened the soda water himself when it was brought, put in the dash of brandy, drank it, and sat down again. Karl Andinnian began to speak, feeling an innate certainty that his words would be wasted ones.

But some explanation of the past is necessary, and it may as well be given here.

When Karl Andinnian went down from London to Weymouth upon the news of his brother's attempted escape and death, he found his mother in a dreadful state of distress—as already related. This distress was not put on : indeed such distress it would not be possible to assume : for Mrs. Andinnian believed the public accounts—that Adam was dead. *After* she had despatched Karl to Foxwood to make arrangements for the interment, the truth was disclosed to her. Sir Adam had escaped with life, and was lying at a house in Weymouth ; but he had been terribly knocked about in the scuffle, and in fact had been considered dead. By the careless stupidity of one of the warders, or else by his connivance, Mrs. Andinnian never entirely knew which, he was reported at the prison as being dead—and perhaps the prison thought itself well rid of so obstreperous an inmate. The warders had said one to another from the time he was first put there, that that Andinnian gentleman had “ mischief ” in him. Further explanation may be given later on in the story : at present it is enough to say that Adam Andinnian escaped.

When Mrs. Andinnian arrived with the body (supposed to be her son's) at Foxwood, she knew the truth. Adam was not dead. He was lying somewhere in great danger ; they would not, from motives of prudence, allow her to know where ; but, dead he was not. Not a hint did she disclose of this to Karl ; and he stood by her side over the grave, believing it was his brother that was placed in it. She called him Sir Karl ; she gave him never a hint that his succession to the title and estates was but a pseudo one ; she suffered him to depart in the false belief. Karl went abroad, re-met Lucy Cleeve, and became engaged to her. He caused the marriage settlements to be drawn up and signed, still never dreaming that he had no legal right to settle, that the revenues were not his. Only when he went down to Foxwood, a day or two before his marriage, did he become acquainted with the truth.

That was the dread secret disclosed to him by his mother ; that, in her fear, she had made him take an oath to keep—“ Adam is not dead.” Just at the first moment Karl thought her intellects must be wandering : but as she proceeded in a few rapid words to tell of his escape, of his dangerous illness, of his lying, even then, hidden away from the terrors of the law, all the dreadful position of his ill-fated brother rushed over Karl as in one long agony. He saw in vivid colours the hazard Adam was running—and must ever run, until either death or re-capture should overtake him ; he saw as if portrayed in a mirror the miserable future that lay before him, the lonely fugitive he must be.

To Karl Andinnian's mind, no fate in this world could be so miserable. Even death on the scaffold would to him have been preferable to this life-time of living dread. He had loved his brother with a keen love ; and he felt this almost as a death blow : he could have died in

his love and pity, if by that means his brother might be saved. Mingling with this regret had come the thought of his own changed position, and that he ought not to marry.

This he said. But Mrs. Andinnian pointed out to him that his position would not be so very materially altered. It was her conviction. That she herself, by connivance with one of the warders, had mainly contributed to the step Adam had taken, that she had been the first to put it into his head, and set him on fire to attempt it, she was all too remorsefully conscious of. Now that he *had* escaped, and was entered in the prison rolls as dead, and lay hidden away in some hole or corner, not daring to come out of it, or to let into it the light of day, she saw what she had done. Not even to her might his hiding-place be disclosed. She saw that his future life must be, at the very best, that of a nameless exile—if, by good fortune, he could make his escape from his own land. If? His person was rather a remarkable one, and well-known to his enemies, the police force. Not one, perhaps, but had his photograph. A fugitive in some barren desert, unfrequented by man, where he must drag on a solitary life of expatriation! Not much of his funds would be needed for this.

"You will have to occupy Foxwood as its master; you must be Sir Karl to the world as you are now," spoke Mrs. Andinnian; "and it is your children who will inherit after you. There is no reason whatever for breaking off your marriage, or for altering any of the arrangements. You will have to pay a certain sum yearly to Adam out of the estate. He will not need it long, poor fellow; a banned man's life, banned to the extent his will be, eats itself away soon."

Hemmed in by perplexities of all kinds, Karl's interview with his mother ended, and he went forth with his care and trouble. His own trouble would have been enough, but it was as nothing to that felt for his brother. He dared not tell the truth to Colonel Cleeve or to Lucy; he almost as little dared, for Lucy's sake, to break off the marriage. And so it took place.

After that, he heard no more until he was again at Foxwood, summoned thither by his mother's illness. Mrs. Andinnian had fretted herself sick. Night and day, night and day was the fear of her son's discovery ever before her mind; she used to see the re-capture in her dreams: remorse wore her out, and fever supervened. She would have given all she possessed in the world could he be safely back at Portland Island without having attempted to quit it. Karl, on his arrival, found her in this sad state: and it was then she disclosed to him a further complication in the case, which she had but recently learnt herself. Sir Adam Andinnian was married.

It may be remembered that he was for a few days absent from his home in Northamptonshire, returning to it only on the eve of the day that news came of Sir Joseph's death, the fatal day when he killed

Martin Scott. He had left home for the purpose of marrying Rose Turner, who was staying in Birmingham, a measure which had been planned between them previously. But for his mother's prejudices—as he called them—he would have married the young lady in the face of day; but he knew she would never consent, and he did not care openly to set her at naught. “We will be married in private, Rose,” he decided, “and I will feel my way afterwards to disclose it to my mother.” And Miss Rose Turner cared for him too much to make any objection. Alas, the time never came for him to disclose it. On the very day after his return to his home, the young lady returning to hers, to her unsuspecting friends, he was thrown into prison on the charge of murder. It was not a time to speak; he wished to spare comment and annoyance to her; and she gave evidence at the trial—which she could not have done had she been his acknowledged wife. All this had been disclosed to Mrs. Andinnian after Karl's marriage. The stranger, Mr. Smith, spoken of by Hewitt as presenting himself at Foxwood, and demanding an interview with its mistress, told her of it: but not then. It was another bitter blow for Mrs. Andinnian, and no doubt helped to bring on the fever. This, in her turn, she disclosed to Karl from her sick bed; and for him it made the complication ten times worse. Had he known his brother had a wife, nothing would have induced him to marry Lucy. Mrs. Andinnian told him more; that Adam had escaped safely to London, where he then lay hidden, and where his wife had joined him; and that they were coming to inhabit the Maze at Foxwood. The last bit of news nearly struck Karl dumb.

“Is he mad?” he asked.

“No, very sane,” replied Mrs. Andinnian. “He wants to be at least on his own grounds: and we all think—he and I and Mr. Smith—that he may be safer here than anywhere. Even were there a suspicion abroad that he is alive—which there is not, and I trust never will be,—his own place is the very last place that people would look into for him. Besides, there will be precautions used—and the Maze is favourable for concealment.”

“It will be utter madness,” spoke Karl. “It will be putting himself into the lion's mouth.”

“It will be nothing of the sort—or Mr. Smith would not approve of it,” retorted Mrs. Andinnian. “I must see my son, Karl: and how else am I to see him? I may not go to him where he is: it might bring suspicion on him; but I can go over to the Maze.”

“Who is Mr. Smith?—and what has he to do with Adam?—and how comes he in the secret?” reiterated Karl.

But to this he could get no answer. Whether Mrs. Andinnian knew, or whether she did not know, she would not say. The one fact—that Mr. Smith held the dangerous secret, and must be conciliated, was quite enough, she said, for Karl. Mr. Smith had Adam's safety and interest

at heart, she went on to state; he wished to be near the Maze to watch over him; and she had given him the pretty cottage opposite the Maze gates to live in, calling him Sir Karl's agent, and appointing him to collect a few rents, so as to give a colouring of ostensibility to the neighbourhood. In vain Karl remonstrated. It was useless. The ground seemed slipping from under all their feet, but he could do nothing.

After all, poor Mrs. Andinnian did not live to see her most beloved son. Anxiety, torment, restlessness, proved too much for her, and brought on the crisis sooner than was expected. On the very day after she died, the tenants came to the Maze—at least, all the tenants who would be seen openly, or be suspected of inhabiting it. They arrived by the last evening train; Mrs. Grey and her attendants, the Hopleys; and took two flies, which were waiting in readiness, on to the Maze; the lady occupying one, Hopley and his wife the other. How Adam Andinnian reached the place, it is not convenient yet to state.

In the course of the next evening, Karl Andinnian went over to the Maze and saw his brother. Adam was much altered. In the fever, which had supervened on his injuries received at the escape, he had lost his hair and become pale and thin. But his spirits were undaunted. He should soon "pick up" now he was in the free open country air and on his own grounds, he said. As to danger, he seemed not to see it, and declared there was less risk of discovery there than anywhere else. Karl could play the grand man and the baronet for him at Foxwood—but he meant, for all that, to have a voice in the ruling of his own estate. Poor Karl Andinnian, on the contrary, saw the very greatest danger in the position of affairs. He would have preferred to shut up Foxwood, leaving only Hewitt to take care of it, that no chance of discovery should arise from either servants or other inhabitants there. But Sir Adam ruled it otherwise; saying he'd not have the Court left to stagnate. Hewitt was in the secret. It might have been neither expedient nor practicable to keep it from him: but the question was decided of itself. One evening just before Mrs. Andinnian's death, when Hewitt had gone to her sick room on some errand at the dusk hour, she mistook him for Karl; and spoke words which betrayed all. Karl was glad of it: it seemed a protection to Adam, rather than not, that his tried old servant should be cognizant of the truth. So Karl went abroad again with his wife, and stayed until his keeping aloof from Foxwood began to excite comment in his wife's family; when he deemed it more expedient to return to it.

And now does the reader perceive all the difficulties of Karl Andinnian? There he was, in a false position: making believe to be a baronet of the realm, and a wealthy man, and the owner of Foxwood; and obliged to make believe. A hint to the contrary, a word that he

was not in his right place, might have set suspicion afloat—and heaven alone knew what would be the ending. For Adam's sake he must be wary and cunning; he must play, so to say, the knave's part and deceive the world. But the dread of his brother's discovery lay upon him night and day, with a very-present awful dread: it was as a burning brand of fire eating away his heart.

And again—you, my reader, can now understand the complication between Karl and his wife. He believed she had discovered the fact that Adam was alive and living concealed at the Maze; *she*, relying on Miss Blake's information, put down the Maze mystery to something of a very different nature. How could he suppose she meant anything but the dangerous truth? How could she imagine that the secret was any other than Miss Blake had so clearly and convincingly disclosed to her? In Lucy's still almost maidenly sensitiveness, she could not bring her lips to allude openly to the nature of her charge: and there was no necessity: she assumed that he knew it even better than she did. In his reluctance to pronounce his brother's name or hint at the secret, lest even the very air should be treacherous and carry it abroad, he was perhaps less open than he might have been. When he offered to relate to her the whole story, she stopped him and refused to listen: and so closed up the explanation that would have set the cruel doubt to rights and her heart at rest.

Sitting there with Adam to-night, in that closely curtained room, Karl entered upon the matter he had come to urge—that his brother should get away from the Maze into some safer place. It was, as Sir Adam expressed it, but the old story—for Karl had never ceased to urge it from the first—and he wholly refused to listen. There was no risk, he said, no fear of discovery, and he should not go away from his own land. Either from this little particular spot of land which was individually his, or from the land of his birth. It was waste of words in Karl to speak further. Adam had always been of the most obstinate possible temperament. But the (supposed) discovery of his wife had frightened Karl worse than ever. He did not mention it to them, since he was not able to say how Lucy had made it.

"As sure as you are living, Adam, you will some day find the place entered by the officers of justice!" he exclaimed in pain.

"Let them enter it," recklessly answered Sir Adam. "They'll not find me."

"Oh Adam, you don't know. They are lynx-eyed and crafty men."

"No doubt. I am all safe, Karl."

Karl had been there longer than usual, and he rose to say good night. Mrs. Grey—for convenience sake we must continue to call her by that name, and Lucy Lady Andinnian—folded up her work and went down stairs with him. She was changed too; but for the better. The very pretty, blooming-faced Rose Turner had come in for her

share of the world's bitter trouble, and it had spiritualized her. The once round face was oval now, the lovely features were refined, the damask cheeks were a shade more delicate, the soft blue eyes had a sad light in them. Miss Blake's words were not misapplied to her—"beautiful as an angel."

"Karl," she whispered, "the dread of discovery is wearing me out. If we could but get away from England!"

"I am sure it will wear out me," was Karl's answer.

"Adam is afraid of Mr. Smith. He thinks he would stop his going. Karl, I fully believe, as truly as I ever believed any great truth in my life, that Mr. Smith is keeping us here and will not let us go. Mr. Smith may appear to be a friend outwardly, but I fear he is an inward enemy. Oh, dear! it is altogether a dreadful situation."

Karl went on home, his brain active, his heart sinking. The manner in which his wife had taken the matter up, distressed him greatly. He supposed she was resenting it chiefly on the score of her father and mother. The colonel had told him that they would rather have followed Lucy to the grave than see her his wife if Sir Adam had lived.

"I wonder how she discovered it?" ran his thoughts—but in truth the fact did not excite so much speculation in his mind, because he was hourly living in the apprehension that people must suspect it. When we hold a dangerous secret, this is sure to be the case. "Perhaps Hewitt let drop an incautious word," he went on musing, "and Lucy caught it up, and guessed the rest. Or—perhaps I dropped one in my sleep."

Crossing the lawn of the Court, he entered by the little smoking-room, his hand pressed upon his aching brow. No wonder that people found fault with the looks of Sir Karl Andinnian! He was wearing to a skeleton. Just as his mother, when she was dying, used to see the recapture of Adam in her dreams, so did Karl see it in his. Night after night would he wake up from one of the dreadful visions. Adam, the re-taken convict, held fast by a heap of scowling, threatening, warders, and a great frightful scaffold conspicuous in the distance. He would start up in bed in horror, believing it was all real, his heart quivering, his hair damp: and once or twice he knew that he had cried out aloud.

"Yes, yes, that's how it must have been," he said, the mystery becoming apparently clear to his eyes as the light of day. "Hewitt is too cautious and true. I have betrayed it in my sleep. Oh, my brother! May heaven help and save him!"

(To be continued.)

ON TIME MEASURERS.

DURING the earliest ages man stood in little need of artificial time measurers. He rose with the sun ; leading forth his flocks and herds, or setting out for the chase, as the long shadows fell westwards ; rested when the sultry beams of noon drove him to the shelter of a rock or group of trees ; and returned to his tent as the sun sloped to the horizon. At night his attention was arrested by the procession of the stars and the phases of the moon. Thus the heavenly bodies served him sufficiently well as clock and almanac, portioning out day and night, months and years.

Weary, as the day drew on, the shepherd or husbandman would probably have learned to notice the movement of a shadow from some pinnacle of rock or lofty palm, and thus each would construct his own rudimentary sun-dial, this first and most obvious method of computing the flying hours.

As communities were formed, and men banded themselves together for one common object, some means of ascertaining the recurrence of stated periods became necessary. Religious festivals, only celebrated at rare intervals, might well be guided by the return of the summer or winter solstice, the new moon, or the rising of the dog-star ; but for every-day matters of business, a more minute subdivision was essential.

The first idea of dividing the day and night into twelve hours each appears to have arisen in imitation of the twelve lunar months, and originated with the Babylonians and Chaldeans. In order to mark these, a shadow cast by the sun was employed first by the Egyptians ; many if not most of their obelisks having been in all probability nothing more nor less than gigantic gnomons.

We are told by Pliny that in Rome the rising and setting of the sun were the only times at first observed. Twelve years before the war with Pyrrhus, however, a sun-dial is said to have been erected at the temple of Quirinus. This dial served as the regulator of time to the Romans for ninety-nine years, after which one was placed near it more accurately divided.

The dial, however, had one great imperfection : it could only be made available when the sun shone. To obviate this inconvenience, the water-clock was invented by the Greeks, and introduced into Rome about 195 B.C.

The water-clock originally consisted merely of an earthenware or metal vessel perforated with a small hole, and filled with water. This was suspended over a second vessel marked with lines, indicating the hours as the water, drop by drop, rose to the level of each mark. The practice prevailed in Athenian Courts of Justice, and also in those of

Rome, of measuring the time allowed to advocates for pleading by means of a water-clock. Three equal portions of water were poured into the upper vessel: one for the prosecutor, one for the defendant, and one for the judge.

After this we have mention of another sun-dial, erected in the Campus Martius by the Emperor Augustus. This obelisk, after having been for centuries buried in ruins, happened to be disinterred in the time of Pope Benedict the Fourteenth.

Hour or sand glasses owed their invention to an Alexandrian about the middle of the third century; these in more northern climates came into very general use, as the excessive variations of temperature caused the clepsydra to measure inaccurately; besides that, in the winter time the water constantly froze.

King Alfred the Great, it is said, measured time by wax tapers, marked off into equal parts, to indicate the hours, as they burned down from line to line. Finding these gutter and waste away in the draught, he had them enclosed in a lantern composed of very thin horn. But such devices were soon to be superseded.

For some time after this, however, the motive power of the clock continued to be water. When Pope Paul the First sent a present of a clock to Pepin, King of France, it was supposed to be the only clock showing the hours on a dial then existing in the world. Subsequently we find mention of one invented by Pacificus, Archdeacon of Genoa, in the ninth century, that indicated the date, the days of the week, and the phases of the moon, as well as the hours. But the most splendid amongst these early specimens of horology must have been the clock presented to Charlemagne by the celebrated Caliph Haroun-el-Raschid and described by Eginhard. Its case consisted of brass, damascened with gold; it marked the hours on a dial, and at the end of each hour an equal number of small iron balls fell on a bell, making it sound. Immediately twelve windows opened, out of which proceeded the same number of horsemen, armed cap-à-pie. These little figures performed various evolutions, and, again withdrawing into the interior, the windows closed until the next hour struck. The motive power of all these works was water.

It has never been clearly ascertained where or by whom weights were first substituted as motive power. This invention must long have remained exceedingly imperfect, for little use was made of clocks in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The first allusion to a striking clock is found in the *Usages de l'ordre des Citeaux*, compiled about A.D. 1120. The sacristan is there directed so to regulate the clock that it "sounds and awakens him before matins;" and in another chapter the monk is ordered to prolong the lecture until "the clock strikes." But it is not stated that this clock struck the hours; it may probably only have emitted a sound sufficiently loud to have attracted attention. During

this period time still continued to be regulated from the rising or setting of the sun, and each morning the clock had to be set in accordance with the appearance of that luminary.

As civilization progressed, exact methods of ascertaining the time became more and more necessary. In the eleventh year of Edward the First, A.D. 1228, the famous Clock House, near Westminster Hall, was built, and furnished with a striking clock, to be heard by the Courts of Law. Even in the reign of Henry the Sixth this clock was considered of so much consequence that the King gave the maintenance of it and its appurtenances to William Warby, Dean of St. Stephen's, together with the pay of sixpence per diem, to be received at the exchequer. In 1286 the first clock was erected in St. Paul's. Canterbury Cathedral possessed the next on record in A.D. 1292.

In these early ages clocks were, of course, expensive affairs, and the trade of clockmaker gave support but to few. In the reign of Edward the Third we find a protection granted to three Dutchmen who were "orlogiers;" but that clocks, or orloges, as they were then called, had by that time ceased to be uncommon appendages to public buildings may be taken for granted, from Chaucer comparing the regularity of a cock crowing to "a clock, or any abbey orloge." In olden times, it may be observed, the term "clock" was applied to any bell rung at stated periods, even if determined by hour-glass or sundial; clocks, as we understand the word, being then universally known as orloges, a word retained as late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Clockmakers, being skilful mechanics, and perhaps desirous of filling up much spare time that would otherwise have been left on their hands, were also makers of automata, and vied with each other in these fanciful and elaborate additions to the different clocks they manufactured. Even to give a list of the most celebrated clocks furnished with automata would occupy too much space; but the employment of simple figures to strike the hours became so general that a "Jack o' the clock," as the automaton was called, passed into a common saying.

An impulse having been given to clockmaking at the commencement of the fourteenth century, however, the art from that time made steady progress. About this period clocks with weights and a fly wheel began to be made for private use. But so costly were they at first as to be out of reach of any but the nobility, and those very wealthy. But commerce still remained limited and social intercourse rare, so that in all ordinary cases the sun-dial, or hour-glass, sufficiently answered every purpose required. In towns, during the night, watchmen were employed to go round and call out the hour, the state of the weather being usually added. This custom prevailed long after striking clocks were placed in all the churches and public buildings; and

even the elders of this generation may remember in provincial towns the voice of the watchman crying out, "Past twelve o'clock, and a cloudy night!"

The next step in time measuring may be dated from the invention of the spiral spring, a band of extremely fine steel, rolled up into a small drum or barrel; this occurred about the end of the fourteenth century. Though the first introduction of the use of watches cannot be determined, it is evident they could not have been manufactured prior to this date, as it is owing to the possibility of enclosing the motive power within a confined space that the construction of portable clocks and watches became practicable.

These portable clocks and watches long remained little better than expensive toys, however, so little to be depended upon were they in their movements, so that the skill of the clock and watchmaker seems to have been expended upon the decoration of the exterior as much as upon the construction of the machinery. Watches of such small size were manufactured that one is mentioned in the sixteenth century as set in a ring, and in 1572 we find that Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, bequeathed to his brother a walking-stick of Indian wood, having a watch placed in its head. Henry the Eighth also is said to have been the possessor of a very small watch that only required winding up every eight days.

During the time of the Valois Kings of France watches continued to be made in all sorts of fanciful shapes; specimens of these old time measurers may be seen at the South Kensington Museum and elsewhere. Those from Nuremberg, manufactured by Peter Hele, were amongst the most prized. They were oval, and hence obtained the name of Nuremberg eggs. But both in England and France the watchmakers fashioned their little machines in the shape of almonds, or acorns, or shells, or a Latin cross, all being highly ornamented with chasing and enamel, and set with jewels. One is described as representing the eagle with Ganymede; the works are contained in the body of the eagle, which, opening across the centre, displays the dial-plate, richly engraved with scrolls and flowers in niello. When not suspended, this watch stands on the claws of the eagle.

When Diana of Poitiers, a widow, became the favourite of Henry the Second of France, a ghastly fashion came in of manufacturing watches, as well as brooches and other ornaments, in all sorts of lugubrious forms, as coffins, or death's heads. A death's head watch, in silver gilt, belonging originally to Mary Queen of Scots, and bequeathed by her to Mary Setoun, is still extant.

About 1540 the *fusée* was invented, thus adding another improvement; and in France the demand for clocks and watches, and consequently the number of artisans employed in the trade, increased so much that in 1544 the guild of master clockmakers in Paris had

become of sufficient importance to claim from Francis the First a statute, securing to them the exclusive privilege of making, or causing to be made, clocks or watches, both large and small, within the precincts of that city.

Still, however, the time measurers of the sixteenth century were sadly imperfect, rendering in every great household a clock-setter as necessary a retainer as a gardener or groom.

II.

THE use of watches can scarcely be said to have become general, even amongst the wealthy classes, till the time of Queen Elizabeth; but that they must then have been familiar to the public is evident, by Shakespeare's frequent allusions to these convenient little time measurers.

"I frown the while, and perchance wind up my watch, or play with some rich jewel," says Malvolio, while contemplating the grandeur to which he imagines himself about to be raised.

And, in the "Tempest," Sebastian exclaims: "Look! he's winding up the watch of his wit, and by-and-by it will strike." Thus proving also that repeaters were then not uncommon.

Amongst ordinary people of Shakespeare's day, however, the pocket dial still served every purpose. This consisted of a brass ring, something like a small dog collar, within which moved in a groove another narrower ring, having a boss pierced with a small hole to admit a ray of light. The inner ring was movable, to allow it to be set according to the varying declination of the sun in the several months. The initials of these are marked on the inside of the larger ring, the hours being lined and numbered on the opposite side. It was doubtless one of these pocket-dials that Touchstone drew from "his poke" when the melancholy Jacques found "a fool in the forest." Dials of a similar construction were carved in wood or even made of pasteboard.

In the reign of Charles the First the English watchmakers gained a charter of incorporation, under the name of the Master, Wardens, and Fellowship of the Art of Clockmaking of the City of London; by which charter all foreign clocks, watches, and alarums were forbidden to be brought into the country. And now another great era in horology is arrived at. In 1639 Galileo Galilei published his observations on the pendulum, which discovery was immediately seized upon and applied as a regulator to clocks. Great has been the contest for the honour of this application of the pendulum; but if Huyghens was not actually the inventor of the pendulum clock, he certainly applied the regulator in the most scientific manner.

A countryman of our own, however, one Richard Harris, invented and made a long pendulum clock as early as 1641; this, or a similar one, was put up in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden. In 1676 a London clockmaker of the name of Barlow invented the repeating

mechanism, by which the hour last struck may be known by pulling a string; and the anchor escapement was added by another clockmaker of the name of Clement in 1680.

Like all idle people, Charles the Second made himself anxious to note the flight of time, and was curious in watches. He generally had a watchmaker—particularly one of the name of East—to attend him whilst playing at the Mall, a watch being often the stake.

But still, in country places, the lower classes were but little acquainted with these time measurers. In proof of this, the following story may be cited. A gentleman of the name of Allen had the unenviable reputation of being a sorcerer—not difficult to gain in those days. Once, when he was staying at a country place in Herefordshire, he happened to leave his watch on the window-seat of his bed-chamber. A woman-servant coming in to arrange the room, and hearing this thing in a case crying tick, tick, tick, took it for granted it was Mr. Allen's familiar. She therefore took hold of it by the string with the tongs, and threw it out of the window into the moat, as she expected. The string caught on the bough of an elder-bush, however, and there hung till it was reclaimed by its owner.

From the seventeenth century it may be said that the use of sun-dials was superseded, though they remained on many a church tower, and ornamented many an old-fashioned garden. "What an antique air had the now almost effaced sun-dials, with their moral inscriptions seeming coeval with that Time which they measured, and to take their revelations of its flight immediately from heaven, holding correspondence with the fountain of light! How would the dark line steal imperceptibly on, watched by the eye of childhood, eager to detect its movement, never caught, nice as an evanescent cloud, or the first arrests of sleep!" So Elia writes. He goes on to say: "What a dead thing is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dulness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure and silent heart-language of the old dial."

This is taking the poetical rather than the practical view of the subject. Still more poetical is the dial described by Marvell—

"How well the skilful gard'ner drew
Of flow'rs and herbs, this dial new:
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;
And, as it works, th' industrious bee
Computes his time as well as we."

Many of these old sun-dials were "quaintly carved," and almost all furnished with moral and appropriate inscriptions. On a sun-dial in a monastery near Florence is the following pretty motto:—

"Mia vita è il sol: dell'uom la vita è Dio.
Senza esso è l'uom, qual senza sol son io."

Which may be literally rendered, "My life is the sun; of man the life is God. Man without Him, is what I am without the sun."

Many instances are on record of the attachment entertained for these old-world time measurers. When Howard, the philanthropist, was dying, he said, "There is a spot near the village of Dauphiny where I should like to be buried; suffer no pomp to be used at my funeral, no monument to mark the spot where I am laid; but put me quietly in the earth, place a sun-dial over my grave, and let me be forgotten." And Sir William Temple desired that his heart might be placed in a silver box, and deposited under the sun-dial in his garden.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we read of a novel application of hour-glasses. After the Reformation long sermons came into vogue; so long that, in order to place some check upon the eloquence of the preachers, hour-glasses were affixed to the pulpit, by which they might measure out the length of their discourses.

In 1623 we find mention of a preacher being attended by a man who brought after him his book and hour-glass; and in many churches the stand for the hour-glass yet remained attached to the pulpit long after the glass was disused. In the church of Hurst, in Berkshire, was a wrought-iron stand intricately designed. It bore the date 1636, and was inscribed with the words, wrought amidst the foliations, "As this glass runneth, so man's life passeth."

In old St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street, the hour-glass stand was of solid silver; it was melted down, and converted into staff-heads for the parish beadsles.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century further improvements were made in the art of watchmaking. The idea of the opposite expansions of different metals as a compensation for a pendulum was suggested, and John Harrison, turning his attention to the subject, constructed with his own hands a chronometer which determined the longitude within such limits as to procure him the Parliamentary reward of £20,000, thus effecting that of which Morin, in writing to Cardinal Richelieu, observed: "I know not what such an undertaking would be even to the devil himself, but to man it would, undoubtedly, be the height of folly."

In the early part of the reign of George the Third two small clocks were presented to the Emperor of China by the East India Company, being amongst the most beautiful and curious specimens of clockwork ever manufactured. Each of the clocks was in the form of a chariot, in which a lady was seated; upon her finger perched a bird, the body of which did not exceed the sixteenth of an inch in diameter; this was constructed to flutter its diamond and ruby wings, on a diamond button being touched. From the front of the chariot two other jewelled birds, set on spiral springs, seemed to be flying, and by a secret motion the chariot could be moved in any direction, a boy behind appearing to push it forward. Underneath the body of the chariot a striking eight-day clock, not larger than a shilling, was placed, and, supported by a

small fluted pillar not thicker than a quill, was a double umbrella, under the largest of which a bell hung. Upon this a hammer struck the hour, and the sound could be repeated at pleasure on touching a diamond button underneath the clock.

The very mention of the names of Arnold and Frodsham will be sufficient, their fame, as having brought watch and chronometer making to its greatest perfection, being universal. On the birthday of George the Third, 1764, Arnold presented his Majesty with a repeating watch set in a ring. Its size did not exceed that of a twopenny silver piece, and its weight was only a fraction over five pennyweights seven grains. The King, in order to show his appreciation of this bijou, presented Arnold with five hundred guineas. The Emperor of Russia afterwards offered this celebrated watchmaker a thousand guineas for a similar tiny time measurer, but Arnold refused to produce a duplicate.

About the year 1770 it became the fashion to wear two watches, the chains and seals from which dangled on each side of the long lapelled waistcoat. In a recipe to make a modern fop, 1777, the following necessities are enumerated :—

“A lofty cane, a sword with silver hilt,
A ring, two watches, and a snuff-box gilt.”

Ladies also followed this fashion. But in those days the two watches were rather over-expensive for ordinary pockets, so a real watch came to be worn on one side, and a dummy, or *fausse montre*, on the other. Some of these sham watches were very elaborate and tasty affairs, often having a highly ornamented dial plate, or, instead, some device set with jewels. Others, however, were merely of gilt metal, or coloured foil. It is said that a Chinese gentleman of the present day scarcely considers his costume complete without two watches of European manufacture, one on each side of his girdle.

What we have to congratulate ourselves upon in the present day is not only the extreme exactitude, but the economy with which our time measurers are capable of being made. The tall clock, in its case of polished and carved wood, used to be an expensive article of furniture; and though the old-fashioned cuckoo-clocks were cheap enough, they were not thoroughly to be depended upon. Now, however, even the cottager or the artizan may have his compact little clock on the chimney-piece, or his watch in his pocket.

To give an idea of the increase of the watchmaking trade, it may be stated that in the year 1858, 346,894 watches were imported from Switzerland alone; and, according to the census of the year 1860, there were then 871 watch and clock makers in the one district of Clerkenwell; thus proving the immense demand for these invaluable time measurers.

AUNT DEAN.

THE Rector of Timberdale at that time was the Rev. Jacob Lewis. Timberdale called him Parson Lewis when not on ceremony. He had married a widow, Mrs. Tanerton: she had a good deal of money and two boys, and the parish people all thought the new lady would be above them. But she turned out to be kind and good, and her boys did not ride roughshod over the land or break down the farmers' fences. She did not live above three or four years, and died after a long illness.

Timberdale talked about her will, calling it a foolish one. She left all she possessed to the rector, "in affectionate confidence," as the will worded it, "knowing he would do what was right and just by her sons." As Parson Lewis was an upright man with a conscience of his own, it was supposed he would do so; but Timberdale considered that for the boys' sake she should have made it sure herself. It was eight hundred a year, good measure.

Parson Lewis had a sister, Mrs. Dean, a widow also, who lived near Liverpool. She was not left well off at all; could but just make a living of it. She used to come on long visits to the parsonage: but it was said that Mrs. Lewis did not like her, thinking her deceitful, and they did not get on very well together. Parson Lewis, the meekest man in the world and most easily led, admitted to his wife that Rebecca had always been a little given to scheming, but he thought her true.

When poor Mrs. Lewis was out of the way in Timberdale churchyard, Mrs. Dean had the field to herself, and came and stayed as long as she pleased, with her child, Alice. She was a little woman with a mild face and fair skin, and had a sort of purring manner with her. Hardly speaking above her breath, and saying "dear" and "love" at every sentence, and caressing people to their faces, the rule was to fall in love with her at once. The boys, Herbert and Jack, took to her without question, and called her "Aunt:" though she was of course no relation whatever.

Both the boys made much of Alice—a bright-eyed, pretty little girl with brown curls and timid, winsome ways. Herbert, who was very studious himself, helped her with her lessons: Jack, who was nearer her age, but a few months older, took her out on expeditions, hay-making and blackberrying and the like, and would bring her home with her frock torn and her knees damaged. He told her brave little girls never cried when with him; and the child would ignore the smart of the grazed knees and show herself as brave as a martyr. Jack was

so brave and fearless himself and made so little of hurts, that she felt a kind of shame at giving way to her natural timidity when with him. But one day, when in the garden with Herbert, she fell down and scratched her leg till the blood came, and at that she roared like a little bull. What Alice liked best was to sit indoors by Herbert's side while he was at his lessons, and read story books and fairy tales. Jack was the opposite of all that, and a regular renegade in all kinds of study. He would have liked to pitch the books into the fire and did not even care for fairy tales. They came often enough to Crabb Cot when we were there, and to our neighbours the Coneys. I was only a little fellow at that time, years younger than they were, but I remember I liked Jack better than Herbert. As did Tod also, for the matter of that. Herbert was too clever for us, and he was to be a parson besides. He chose the calling for himself. More than once he was caught muffled in the parson's white surplice, preaching to Jack and Alice a sermon he had composed.

Aunt Dean had her plans. One great plot was always at work. She made it into a dream, and peeped into it night and day, as if it were a kaleidoscope of fascinating colours. Herbert Tanerton was to marry her daughter and succeed to his mother's property as eldest son: Jack must go adrift, and earn his own living. She considered it three parts as good as accomplished. To see Herbert and Alice poring over books together side by side and to know that they had the same tastes, was welcome to her as the sight of gold. As to Jack, with his roving propensities and his climbing and his daring, she thought it little matter if he came down a tree head-foremost some day, or pitched neck over heels into the depths of Crabb Ravine, and so threw away his life. Not that she really wished any cruel fate for the boy: but she did not care for him; and he might be terribly in the way when her foolish brother, the parson, came to apportion out the money. And he *was* foolish in some things; soft, in fact: she often said it.

One summer day when the fruit was ripe and the sun shining, Mr. Lewis had gone into the study to write his next Sunday's sermon. He did not get on very quickly, for Aunt Dean was in there also, and it disturbed him a little. She was of a restless habit, everlastingly dusting books, and putting things in their places without need.

"Do you wish to keep out all *three* of these inkstands, Jacob? It is not necessary, I should think. Shall I put one up?"

The parson took his eyes off his sermon to answer. "I don't see that they do any harm, Rebecca. The children are using two sometimes. Do as you like, however."

Mrs. Dean put one of the inkstands inside the book-case, and then looked round the room to see what else she could do. A letter caught her eye.

"Jacob, I do believe you have never answered the note old Mullet brought this morning! There it is on the mantel-piece."

The parson sighed. To be interrupted in this way he took quite as a matter of course, though it teased him a little.

"I must see the churchwardens, Rebecca, before I answer it. I want to know, you see, what would be best approved of by the parish."

"Just like you, Jacob," she caressingly said. "The parish must approve of what you approve."

"Yes, yes," he hastily said; "but I like to live at peace with everybody."

He dipped his pen into the ink and wrote a line in his sermon. The open window looked on the kitchen-garden. Herbert Tanerton had his back against the walnut tree, doing nothing. Alice sat near on a stool, her head buried in a book that by its canvas cover Mrs. Dean knew to be "*Robinson Crusoe*." Just then Jack came out of the raspberry bushes with a handful of fruit, which he held out for Alice to eat. "*Robinson Crusoe*" fell to the ground.

"Oh, Jack, how good they are!" said Alice. And the words came distinctly to Aunt Dean's ears in the still day.

"They are as good again when you pick them off the trees for yourself," cried Jack. "Come along and get some, Alice."

With the taste of the raspberries in her mouth the temptation was not to be resisted; and she ran after Jack. Aunt Dean put her head out at the window.

"Alice, my love, I cannot have you go amidst those raspberry bushes: you would stain and tear your frock."

"I'll take care of her frock, aunt," called back Jack.

"My darling Jack, it cannot be. That is her new muslin frock, and she must not go where she might hurt it."

So Alice sat down again to "*Robinson Crusoe*," and Jack went his way amid the raspberry bushes, or whither he would.

"Jacob, have you begun to think of what John is to be?" resumed Aunt Dean, as she shut down the window.

The parson pushed his sermon from him in a kind of patient hopelessness, and turned round on his chair. "To be?—in what way, Rebecca?"

"In profession," she answered. "I fancy it is time it was thought of."

"Do you? I'm sure I don't know. The other day when something was being mentioned about it, Jack said he did not care what he was to be, provided he had no books to trouble him."

"I only hope you will not have trouble with him, Jacob dear," observed Mrs. Dean in an ominous tone, that plainly intimated she thought the parson would.

"He has a good heart, though he is not so studious as his brother. Why have you shut the window, Rebecca? It is very warm."

Mrs. Dean did not say why. Perhaps she wished to guard against the conversation being heard. When any question not quite convenient to answer was put to her, she had a way of passing it by in silence : and the parson was too yielding or too inert to ask again.

"Of course, Brother Jacob, you will make Herbert the heir."

The parson looked surprised. "Why should you suppose that, Rebecca? I think the two boys ought to share and share alike."

"My dear Jacob, how *can* you think so? Your dead wife left you in charge, remember."

"That's what I do remember, Rebecca. She never gave me the slightest hint that she should wish a difference to be made : she was as fond of one boy as of the other."

"Jacob, you must do your duty by the boys," returned Mrs. Dean, with affectionate solemnity. "Herbert must be his mother's heir ; it is right and proper it should be so : Jack must be trained to earn his own livelihood. Jack—dear fellow !—is, I fear, of a roving, random disposition : leave any portion of the money to him, and he would squander it in a year."

"Dear me, I hope not ! But as to leaving all to his brother—or even a larger portion than to Jack—I don't know that it would be right. A heavy responsibility lies on me in this charge, don't you see, Rebecca."

"No doubt it does. It is full eight hundred a year. And you must be putting something by, Jacob."

"Not much. I draw the money yearly, but expenses seem to swallow it. What with the ponies kept for the boys and the cost of the masters from Worcester, and a hundred a year out of it that my wife desired the poor old nurse should have till she died, there's not a great deal left. My living is a poor one, you know, and I like to help the poor freely. When the boys go to the university it will all be wanted."

Help the poor freely !—just like him ! thought Aunt Dean.

"It would be waste of money and waste of time to send Jack to college. You should try and get him some appointment abroad, Jacob. In India, say."

The clergyman opened his eyes at this, and said he should not like to see Jack go out of his own country. Jack's mother had not had any opinion of foreign places. Jack himself interrupted the conversation. He came flying up the path, put down a cabbage leaf of raspberries, and flung open the window with his stained fingers.

"Aunt Dean, I've picked these for you," he said, introducing the leaf, his handsome face and his good natured eyes sparkling. "They've never been so good as they are this year. Father, you just taste them."

Aunt Dean smiled sweetly, and called him her darling, and Mr. Lewis tasted the raspberries.

"We were just talking of you, Jack," cried the unsophisticated man

—and Mrs. Dean knitted her brows slightly. “Your aunt says it is time you began to think of some profession.”

“What, yet awhile?” returned Jack.

“That you may be suitably educated for it, my boy.”

“I should like to be something that won’t want education,” cried Jack, leaning his arms on the window-sill and jumping up and down. “I think I’d rather be a farmer than anything, father.”

The parson drew a long face. It had never entered into his calculation.

“I fear that would not do, Jack. I should like you to choose something higher than that; some good profession by which you may rise in the world. Herbert will go into the Church: what should you say to the Bar?”

Jack’s jumping ceased all at once. “What, to be a barrister, father! Like those be-wigged fellows that come circuit twice a year to Worcester?”

“Like that, Jack.”

“But they have to study all their lives for it, father; and read up millions of books before they can pass! I couldn’t do it; I couldn’t indeed.”

“What do you think of being a high class lawyer, then? I might place you with some good firm, such as——”

“Don’t, there’s a dear father!” interrupted Jack, pulling a long face, which seemed to send all its sunshine out of it. “I’m afraid if I were at a desk I should kick it over without knowing it: I must be running out and about.—Are they all gone, Aunt Dean? Give me the leaf to throw away, and I’ll pick you some more.”

The years went on. Jack was fifteen; Herbert eighteen and at Oxford: the advanced scholar had gone to college early. Aunt Dean spent quite half her time at Timberdale, from Easter till autumn, and the parson never rose against it. She let her house during her absence: it was situated on the banks of the river a little way from Liverpool, near the place they call New Brighton now. One family always took it for the summer months, glad to get out of hot Liverpool.

As to Jack, nothing had been decided in regard to his future, for opinions on it differed. A little Latin and a little history and a great deal of geography (for he liked that) had been drilled into him: and about there his education ended. But he was the best climber and walker and leaper, and withal the best hearted young fellow that Timberdale could boast; and he knew all about land thoroughly, and possessed a great stock of general and useful information. Many a day when some of the poorer farmers were in a desperate hurry to get in their hay or carry their wheat on account of threatening weather, has Jack Tanerton turned out to help, and worked as hard and as long as any of the labourers. He was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, rich and poor.

Mrs. Dean had worked on always to accomplish her ends. Slowly and imperceptibly, but surely: Herbert must be the heir; John must shift for himself. The parson had had this dinned into him so often now, in her apparently frank and reasoning way, that he began to lend an ear. What with his strict sense of innate justice, and his habit of yielding to his sister's views, he felt mostly in a kind of pickle. But Mrs. Dean had come over this time determined to get something settled, one way or the other.

She arrived before Easter this year. The interminable Jack (as she often called him in her heart) was at home; Herbert not. Jack and Alice did not seem to miss him, but went out on their rambles together as they did when children. The morning before Herbert was expected, a letter came from him to his step-father, saying he had been invited by a fellow student to spend the Easter holidays at his home near London and had accepted it.

Mr. Lewis took it as a matter of course in his easy way; but it disagreed with Aunt Dean. She said all manner of things to the parson, and incited him to write for Herbert to return at once. Herbert's answer to this was a courteous intimation that he could not alter his plans: and he hoped his father, on consideration, would fail to see any good reason why he should. Herbert Tanerton had a will of his own.

"Neither do I see any reason, good or bad, why he should not pay the visit, Rebecca," confessed the rector. "I'm afraid it was foolish of me to object at all. Perhaps I have not the right to deny him, either, if I wished it. He is getting on for nineteen, and I am not his own father."

So Aunt Dean had to make the best and the worst of it; but she felt as cross as two sticks.

One day when the parson was abroad on parish matters, and the Rectory empty, she went out for a stroll, and reached the high steep bank where the primroses and violets grew. Looking over, she saw Jack and Alice seated below; Jack's arm round her waist.

"You are to be my wife, you know, Alice, when we are grown up. Mind that."

There was no answer, but Aunt Dean certainly thought she heard the sound of a kiss. Peeping over again, she saw Jack taking it.

"And if you don't object to my being a farmer, Alice, I should like it best of all. We'll keep two jolly ponies and ride about together. Won't it be good!"

"I don't object to farming, Jack. Anything you like. A successful farmer's home is a very pleasant one."

Aunt Dean drew away with noiseless steps. She was too calm and callous a woman to turn white; but she did turn angry, and registered a vow in her heart. That presuming, upstart Jack! They were but two little fools, it's true; children; but the nonsense must be stopped in time.

Herbert went back to Oxford without coming home. Alice, to her own infinite astonishment, was despatched to school till midsummer. The parson and his sister and Jack were left alone; and Aunt Dean, with her soft smooth manner and her false expressions of endearment, ruled all things: her brother's better nature amid the rest.

Jack was asked what he would be. A farmer, he answered. But Aunt Dean had somehow caught up the most bitter notions possible against farming in general; and Mr. Lewis, not much liking the thing himself, and yielding to the under current ever gently flowing, told Jack he must fix on something else.

"There's nothing I shall do so well at as farming, father," remonstrated Jack. "You can put me for three or four years to some good agriculturist, and I'll be bound at the end of the time I should be fit to manage the largest and best farm in the county. Why, I am a better farmer now than some of them."

"Jack, my boy, you must not be self-willed. I cannot let you be a farmer."

"Then send me to sea, father, and make a sailor of me," returned Jack, in his good humour.

But this startled the parson. He liked Jack, and he had a horror of the sea. "Not that, Jack, my boy. Anything but that."

"I'm not sure but I should like the sea better than farming," went on Jack, the idea full in his head. "Aunt Dean lent me 'Peter Simple' one day. I know I should make a first-rate sailor."

"Jack, don't talk so. Your poor mother would not have liked it, and I don't like it; and I shall never let you go."

"Some fellows run away to sea," said Jack, laughing.

The parson felt as though a bucket of cold water was thrown down his back. Did Jack mean that as a threat?

"John," said he, in as solemn a way as he had ever spoken, "disobedience to parents sometimes brings a curse with it. You must promise me that you will never go to sea."

"I'll not promise that, off hand," said Jack. "But I will promise never to go without your consent. Think it over well, father: there's no hurry."

It was on the tip of Mr. Lewis's tongue to withdraw his objection to the farming scheme there and then: in comparison with the other it looked quite fair and bright. But he thought he might compromise his judgment to yield thus instantly: and, as easy Jack said, there was no hurry.

So Jack went rushing out of doors again to the uttermost bounds of the parish, and the parson was left to Aunt Dean. When he told her he meant to let Jack be a farmer, she laughed till the tears came into her eyes, and begged him to leave matters to her. *She* knew how to manage boys, without appearing directly to cross them: there was this

kind of trouble with more boys, than not, before they settled satisfactorily in life, but it all came right in the end.

So the parson said no more about farming: but Jack talked a great deal about the sea. Mr. Lewis went over in his gig to Worcester, and bought a book he had heard of, "Two Years before the Mast." He wrote Jack's name in it and gave it him, hoping its contents might serve to sicken him of the sea.

The next morning the book was missing. Jack looked high and low for it, but it was gone. He had left it on the sitting-room table when he went up to bed, and it mysteriously disappeared during the night. The servants had not seen it, and declared it was not on the table in the morning.

"It could not—I suppose—have been the cat," observed Aunt Dean, in a doubtful manner, her eyes full of wonder as to where the book could have got to. "I have heard of cats doing strange things."

"I don't think the cat could make away with a book of that size, Rebecca," said the parson. And if he had not been the least suspicious parson in all the Worcester Diocese, he might have asked his sister whether *she* had been the cat, and secured the book lest it should serve to dissipate Jack's fancy for the sea.

The next thing she did was to carry Jack off to Liverpool. The parson objected at first: Liverpool was a sea-port town, and might put Jack more in mind of the sea than ever. Aunt Dean replied that she meant him to see the worst sides of a sea life, the dirty boats in the Mersey, the wretchedness of the crews, the real discomfort and misery of a sailor's life. That would cure him, she said: what he had got in his head now was the romance picked up from books. The parson thought there was reason in this, and yielded. He was dreadfully anxious about Jack.

She went straight to her house near New Brighton, Jack with her, and a substantial sum in her pocket from the rector for Jack's keep. The old servant, Peggy, who took care of it, was thunderstruck to see her mistress come in. It was not yet occupied by the Liverpool people, and Mrs. Dean sent them word they could not have it this year: at least not for the present. While she got matters straight, she supplied Jack with all Captain Marryat's novels to read. The house looked on the river, and Jack would watch the fine grand vessels starting on their long voyages, their trim white sails glowing fair in the sunshine, or hear the joyous shouts from the sailors of a homeward bound ship as Liverpool hove in view; and he grew to think there was no sight so pleasant to the eye as these beautiful ships; no fate so desirable as to sail in them.

But Aunt Dean had certainly changed her tactics. Instead of sending Jack on to the dirtiest and worst managed boats in the docks, where the living was hard and the sailors were discontented, she allowed him to

roam at will on the finest ships, and make acquaintance with their enthusiastic young officers, especially with those who were going to sea for the first time with just such notions as Jack's. Before midsummer came, Jack Tanerton had got to think that he could never be happy on land.

There was a new ship just launched, the *Rose of Delhi*; a magnificent vessel. Jack took rare interest in her. He was for ever on board; was for ever saying to her owners—friends of Aunt Dean's, to whom she had introduced him—how much he should like to sail in her. The owners thought it would be an advantageous thing to get so active, open, and ready a lad into their service, although he was somewhat old for entering, and they offered to article him for four years, as "midshipman" on the *Rose of Delhi*. Jack went home with his tale, his eyes glowing; and Aunt Dean neither checked him nor helped him.

Not then. Later, when the ship was all but ready to sail, she told Jack she washed her hands of it, and recommended him to write and ask his step-father whether he might sail in her, or not.

Now Jack was no letter writer: neither, truth to tell, was the parson. He had not once written home; but had contented himself with sending affectionate messages in Aunt Dean's letters. Consequently, Mr. Lewis only knew what Aunt Dean had chosen to tell him, and had no idea that Jack was getting the real sea fever. But at the suggestion Jack sat down now, and wrote a long letter.

Its purport was this. That he was longing and hoping to go to sea; was sure he should never like anything else in the world so well; that the *Rose of Delhi*, Captain Druce, was the most magnificent ship ever launched; that the owners bore the best characters in Liverpool for liberality, and Captain Druce for kindness to his middies; and that he hoped, oh he hoped, his father would let him go: but that if he still refused, he (Jack) would do his best to be content to stay on shore, for he did not forget his promise of never sailing without consent.

"Would you like to see the letter, Aunt Dean, before I shut it up?" he asked.

Aunt Dean, who had been sitting by, took the letter, and privately thought it was as good a letter and as much to the purpose as the best scribe in the land could have written. She disliked it, for all that.

"Jack, dear, I think you had better put a postscript," she said. "Your father detests writing, as you know. Tell him that if he consents he need not write any answer: you will know what it means,—that you may go—and it will save him trouble."

"But, Aunt Dean, I should like him to wish me good-bye and God speed."

"He will be sure to do the one in his heart and the other in his prayers, my boy. Write your postscript."

Jack did as he was bid: he was as docile as his step-father. Exactly as Mrs. Dean suggested, wrote he: and he added that if no answer arrived within two posts, he should take it for granted that he was to go, and should see about his outfit. There was no time to lose, for the ship would sail in three or four days.

"I will post it for you, Jack," she said, when it was ready. "I am going out."

"Thank you, Aunt Dean, but I can post it myself. I'd rather; and then I shall know it's off. Oh sha'n't I be on thorns till the time for an answer comes and goes!"

He snatched his cap and vaulted off with the letter before he could be stopped. Aunt Dean had a curious look on her face, and sat biting her lips. She had not intended the letter to go.

The first post that could possibly bring an answer brought one. Jack was not at home. Aunt Dean had sent him out on an early commission, watched for the postman, and hastened to the door herself to receive what he might bring. He brought two letters—as it chanced. One from the Rector of Timberdale; one from Alice Dean. Mrs. Dean locked the one up in her private drawer above stairs: the other she left on the breakfast table.

"Peggy says the postman has been here, aunt!" cried the boy, all excitement, as he ran in.

"Yes, dear. He brought a letter from Alice."

"And nothing from Timberdale?"

"Well, I don't know that you could quite expect it by this post, Jack. Your father might like to take a little time for consideration. You may read Alice's letter, my boy: she comes home this day week for the summer holidays."

"Not till this day week!" cried Jack in frightful disappointment. "Why I shall have sailed then, if I go, Aunt Dean! I sha'n't see her."

"Well, dear, you will see her when you come home."

Aunt Dean had no more commissions for Jack after that, and each time the postman was expected, he posted himself outside the door to wait for him. The man brought no other letter. The reasonable time for an answer went by, and there came none.

"Aunt Dean, I suppose I may get my outfit now," said Jack, only half satisfied. "But I wish I had told him to write in any case: just a line."

"According to what you said, you know, Jack, silence must be taken to give consent."

"Yes I know. But I'd rather have had a word, and made certain. I wish there was time for me just to run over to Timberdale and see him!"

"But there's not, Jack, more's the pity: you would lose the ship."

Get a piece of paper and make out a list of the articles the second mate told you you would want."

The Rose of Delhi sailed out of port for Calcutta, and John Tanerton with her, having signed articles to serve in her for four years. The night before his departure he wrote a short letter of farewell to his step-father, thanking him for his tacit consent, and promising to do his best to get on, concluding it with love to himself and to Herbert and to the Rectory servants. Which letter somehow got put into Aunt Dean's kitchen fire, and never reached Timberdale.

Aunt Dean watched the Rose of Delhi sail by; Jack, in his bran new uniform, waving his last farewells to her with his gold-banded cap. The sigh of relief she heaved when the fine vessel was out of sight seemed to do her good. Then she bolted herself into her chamber, and opened Mr. Lewis's letter, which had lain untouched till then. As she expected, it contained a positive interdiction, written half sternly, half lovingly, for John to sail in the Rose of Delhi or to think more of the sea. Moreover it commanded him home at once, and it contained a promise that he should be placed to learn the farming without delay. Aunt Dean tripped to Peggy's fire and burnt that too.

There was a dreadful fuss when Jack's departure became known at Timberdale. It fell upon the parson like a thunder-bolt. He came striding through the ravine to Crabb Cot, and burst out crying, while telling the news to the Squire. He feared he had failed somehow in bringing John up, he said, or he never would have repaid him with this base disobedience and ingratitude. For, you see, the poor man thought Jack had received his letter, and gone off in defiance of it. The Squire agreed with him that Jack deserved the cat-o'-nine tails, and all other boys who traitorously decamped to sea.

Before the hay was all got in, Aunt Dean was back at Timberdale, bringing Alice with her and the bills for the outfit. She let the parson think what he would about Jack, ignoring all knowledge of the letter, and affecting to believe that Jack could not have had it. But the parson argued that Jack must have had it and did have it, or it would have come back to him. The only one to say a good word for Jack was Alice. She persisted in an opinion that Jack could not be either disobedient or ungrateful, and that there must have been some strange mistake somewhere.

Aunt Dean's work was not all done. She took the poor parson under her wing, and proved to him that he had no resource now but to disinherit Jack, and make Herbert the entire heir. To leave money to Jack would be wanton waste, she urged, for he would be sure to squander it: better bequeath all to Herbert, who would of course look after his brother in later life, and help him if he needed help. So one of the Worcester solicitors, Mr. Hill, was sent for to Timberdale to receive instructions for making the parson's will in Herbert's favour, and to cut off Jack.

That night, after Mr. Hill had gone back again, was one of the worst the parson ever spent. He was a just man and a kind one, and he felt racked with fear lest he had taken too severe a measure, and one that his late wife, the true owner of the money and John's mother, would never have sanctioned. His bed was as a fever, his pillow a torment ; up he got, and walked the room in his night-shirt.

"My Lord and God knoweth that I would do what is right," he groaned. "I am sorely troubled. Youth is vain and desperately thoughtless : perhaps the boy, in his love of adventure, never looked at the step in the light of ingratitude. I cannot cut him quite off ; I should never find peace of mind if I did. He shall have a little : and perhaps if he grows into a steady fellow and comes back what he ought to be, I may alter the will later and leave them equal."

The next day the parson wrote privately to Mr. Hill, saying he had reconsidered his determination and would let Jack inherit to the extent of a hundred and fifty pounds a year.

Herbert came home for the long vacation ; and he and Alice were together as they had been before that upstart Jack stepped in. They often came to the Squire's and oftener to the Coneys'. Grace Coney, a niece of old Coney, had come to live at the farm ; she was a nice girl, and she and Alice liked each other. You might see them with Herbert strolling about the fields any hour in the day. At home Alice and Herbert seemed never to care to separate. Mrs. Dean watched them quietly, and thought how beautifully her plans had worked.

Aunt Dean did not go home till October. After she left, the parson had a stroke of paralysis. Charles Ashton, then just ordained to priest's orders, took the duty. Mrs. Dean came back again for Christmas. As if she would let Alice stay away when Herbert was at home !

The Rose of Delhi did not come home for nearly two years. She was what is called a free ship and took charters for any place she could make money by. One day Alice Dean was leaning out of one of the windows of her mother's house, gazing wistfully on the sparkling sea, when a grand and stately vessel came sailing homewards, and some brown-faced young fellow on the quarter deck set on to swing his cap violently by way of hailing "her. She looked to the flag which happened to be flying, and read the name there, "The Rose of Delhi." It must be Jack who was saluting. Alice burst into tears of emotion.

He came up from the docks the same day. A great brown handsome fellow with the old single heart and open manners. And he clasped Alice in his arms and kissed her ever so many times before she could get free. Being a grown-up young lady now, she did not approve of unceremonious kissing, and told Jack so. Aunt Dean was not present, or she might have told him so more to the purpose.

Jack had given satisfaction, and was getting on. He told Alice

privately that he did not like the sea so much as he had anticipated, and could not believe any other fellow did; but as he had chosen it as his calling he meant to stand by it. He went to Timberdale, in spite of Aunt Dean's advice and efforts to keep him away. Herbert was absent, she said, the rector ill and childish. Jack found it all too true. Mr. Lewis's mind had failed and his health was breaking. He knew Jack and was over-affectionate with him, but seemed not to remember anything of the past. So never a word did Jack hear of his own disobedience, or of any missing letters.

One person alone questioned him; and that was Alice. It was after he got back from Timberdale. She asked him to tell her the history of his sailing in the *Rose of Delhi*, and he gave it in detail, without reserve. When he spoke of the postscript that Aunt Dean had bade him add to his letter, arranging that silence should be taken for consent, and that as no answer had come he of course had so taken it, the girl turned sick and faint. She saw the treachery that had been at work and where it had lain; but for her mother's sake she hushed it up and let the matter pass. Alice had not lived with her mother so many years without detecting her propensity for deceit.

Some years passed by. Jack got on well. He served as third mate on the *Rose of Delhi* long before he could pass, by law, for second. He was made second mate as soon as he had passed for it. The *Rose of Delhi* came in and went out, and Jack stayed by her, and passed for first mate in course of time. He was not sent back in any of his examinations, as most young sailors are, and the board once went the length of complimenting him on his answers. The fact was, Jack held to his word of doing his best: he got into no mischief and was the smartest sailor afloat. He was in consequence a favourite with the owners, and Captain Druce took pains with him and brought him on in seamanship and navigation, and showed him how to take observations, and all the rest of it. There's no end of difference in merchant-captains in this respect: some teach their junior officers nothing. Jack finally passed triumphantly for master, and hoped his time would come some day to get a command. Meanwhile he went out again as first mate on the *Rose of Delhi*.

One spring morning there came news to Mrs. Dean from Timberdale. The rector had had another stroke and was thought to be near his end. She started off at once, with Alice. Charles Ashton had had a living given to him; and Herbert Tanerton was his step-father's curate. Herbert had passed as shiningly in mods and divinity and all the rest of it as Jack had before the marine board. He was a steady, thoughtful, serious young man, did his duty well in the parish and preached better sermons than ever the rector had. Mrs. Dean, who looked upon him as Alice's husband just as surely as though they were married, was as proud of his success as though it had been her own.

The rector was very ill and unable to leave his bed. His intellect was quite gone now. Mrs. Dean sat with him most of the day, leaving Alice to be taken care of by Herbert. They went about together just as always and were on the best of confidential terms; and came over to the Coneys', and to us when we were at Crabb Cot.

"Herbert," said Mrs. Dean one evening when she had got all her soft, sugary manner upon her and was making the young parson believe she had nobody's interest at heart in the world but his, "my darling boy, is it not almost time you began to think of marriage? None know the happiness and comfort brought by a good wife, dear, until they experience it."

Herbert looked taken to. He turned as red as a schoolgirl and glanced half a moment at Alice, like a detected thief.

"I must wait until I get a living to think of that, Aunt Dean."

"Is it necessary, Herbert? I should have thought you might bring a wife home to the Rectory here."

Herbert turned off the subject with a jesting word or two, and got out of his redness. Aunt Dean was eminently satisfied: his confusion and his impromptu glance at Alice had told tales; and she knew it was only a question of time.

The rector died. When the grass was long and the May flowers were in bloom and the cuckoo was singing in the trees, he passed peacefully to his Rest. Just before death he recovered speech and consciousness: but the chief thing he said was that he left his love to Jack.

After the funeral the will was opened. It had not been touched since that far past year when Jack had gone away to sea. Out of the eight hundred a year descended from their mother Jack had a hundred and fifty; Herbert the rest. Aunt Dean made a hideous frown for once in her life: a hundred and fifty pounds a year for Jack was only, as she looked upon it, so much robbery on Herbert and Alice. Out of the little money saved by the rector five hundred pounds was left to his sister, Rebecca Dean; the rest was to be divided equally between Herbert and Jack; and his furniture and effects went to Herbert. On the whole Aunt Dean was tolerably satisfied.

She was a woman who liked to keep up appearances strictly, and she made a move to leave the young parson at the end of a week or two's time, and go back to Liverpool. Herbert did not detain her. His own course was uncertain until a fresh rector should be appointed. The living was in the gift of a neighbouring baronet, and it was fancied by some that he might give it to Herbert. One thing did surprise Mrs. Dean; angered her too: that Herbert had not made his offer to Alice before their departure. Now that he had his own fortune at command, there was no necessity for him to wait for a living.

News greeted them on their arrival. The Rose of Delhi was on her way home once more, with John Tanerton in command. Captain

Druce had been left behind at Calcutta, dangerously ill. Alice's colour came and went; she looked out for the homeward-bound vessels passing inwards, and felt quite sick with anxiety lest Jack should fail in any way, and never bring home the ship.

"The Rose of Delhi, Captain Tanerton." Alice Dean cast her eyes on the ship news in the morning paper, and read the announcement amidst the arrivals. Just for an instant her sight left her.

"Mamma," she presently said, quietly passing over the newspaper, "the Rose of Delhi is in."

"The Rose of Delhi, Captain Tanerton," read Mrs. Dean. "The idea of their sticking in Jack's name as Captain! He will have to go down again as soon as Captain Druce returns. A fine captain I dare say he has made!"

"At least he has brought the ship home safely and quickly," Alice ventured to say. "It must have passed after dark last night."

"Why after dark?"

Alice did not reply. Because I was watching till daylight faded—which would have been the truth. "Had it passed before, some of us might have seen it, mamma."

The day was waning before Jack came up. Captain Tanerton. Jack was never to go back again to his chief-mateship, as Aunt Dean had surmised, for the owners had given him the permanent command of the Rose of Delhi. The last mail had brought news from Captain Druce that he should never be well enough for the command again, and the owners were only glad to give it to the younger and more active man. The officers and crew alike reported that never a better master sailed than Jack had proved himself on this homeward voyage.

"Don't you think I have been very lucky on the whole, Aunt Dean? Fancy a young fellow like me getting such a beautiful ship as that!"

"Oh, very lucky," returned Aunt Dean.

Jack looked like a captain too. He was broad and manly, with an intelligent, honest, handsome face, and the quick keen eye of a sailor. Jack was particular in his attire too: and all of them were not.

"Only a hundred and fifty left to me!" cried Jack, when he was told the news. "Well, perhaps Herbert may require more than I, poor fellow," he added in his good nature; "he may not get a good living, and then he'll be glad of it. I shall be sure to do well now I've got the ship."

"You'll be at sea always, Jack, and will have no use for money," said Mrs. Dean.

"Oh, I don't know about having no use for it, aunt. Anyway, my father thought it right to leave it so, and I am content. I wish I could have said farewell to him before he died!"

A few days more, and Aunt Dean was thrown on her beam-ends at a worse angle than ever the Rose of Delhi hoped to be. Jack and Alice

discussed matters between themselves, and the result was disclosed to her. They were going to be married.

It was Alice who told. Jack had just left, and she and her mother were sitting together in the summer twilight. At first Mrs. Dean thought Alice was joking, and she was like a mad woman when she found it true. Her great dream had never foreshadowed this.

"How dare you to attempt to think of so monstrous a thing, you wicked girl? Marry your own brother-in-law!—'twould be no better. It is Herbert that is to be your husband."

Alice shook her head with a smile. "Herbert would not have me, mamma, nor I him. Herbert will marry Grace Coney."

"Who?" cried Mrs. Dean.

"Grace Coney. They have been in love with one another ever so many years. I have known it all along. He will marry her as soon as his future is settled. I had promised to be one of the bridesmaids, but I suppose I shall not get the chance now."

"Grace Coney—that beggarly girl!" shrieked Mrs. Dean. "But for her uncle's giving her shelter she must have turned out in the world when her father died and got her living how she could. She is not a lady. She is not Herbert's equal."

"Oh, yes, she is, mamma. At any rate he thinks so. She is a nice girl and will make him a perfect wife. Herbert would not exchange her for the first lady in the land."

"If Herbert chooses to make a spectacle of himself, you never shall," cried poor Mrs. Dean, all her golden visions fast melting into air. "I would see that wicked Jack Tanerton at the bottom of the sea first."

"Mother dear, listen to me. Jack and I have cared for each other for years and years, and we should neither of us marry any other. There is nothing to wait for: Jack is as well off as he will be for years to come: and—and we have settled it so, and I hope you will not oppose it."

It was a cruel moment for Aunt Dean. Her love for other people had been all pretence, but she did love her daughter. Besides that, she was ambitious for her.

"I can never let you marry a sailor, Alice. Anything but that."

"It was you made Jack a sailor, mother, and there's no help for it," said Alice, in a low tone. "I would rather he had been anything else in the world. I would have liked him to have had land and farmed it. We should have done well. Jack had his four hundred a year clear, you know. At least, he ought to have had it. Oh, mother, don't you see that while you have been plotting against Jack you have plotted against me?"

Aunt Dean felt sick with the memories that were crowding upon her. The mistake she had made was a frightful one.

"You cannot join your fate to Jack's, Alice," she repeated, wringing her hands. "A sailor's wife is too liable to be made a widow."

"I know it, mother. I shall share his danger, for I am going out in the *Rose of Delhi*. The owners have consented, and Jack is fitting-up a lovely little cabin for me that is to be my own saloon."

"My daughter sailing over the seas in a merchant ship! Never!"

"I should be no true wife if I could let my husband sail without me. Mother, it is you alone who have carved out our destiny. Better have left it to God."

In a startled way, her heart full of remorse, she was beginning to see it. "It is a miserable prospect, Alice."

"Mother, we shall get on. There's the hundred and fifty a year certain, you know. That we shall put by; and as long as I sail with him, a good deal more besides. Jack's pay is fixed at twenty pounds a month, and he will make more by commission: perhaps as much again. Have no fear for us on that score. Jack has been deprived unjustly of his birthright; and I think sometimes that perhaps as a recompense Heaven will prosper him."

"But the danger, Alice! the danger of a sea-life!"

"Do you know what Jack says about the danger, mother? He says God is over us on the sea as well as on the land and will take care of those who put their trust in Him. In the wildest storm I will try to let that great truth help me to feel peace."

Alas for Aunt Dean! The arguments slipped away from her hands just as her plans had slipped. In her bitter repentance, she lay on the floor of her room that night and asked God to have pity upon her, for her trouble seemed greater than she could bear.

The morning's post brought news from Herbert. He was made Rector of Timberdale. Aunt Dean wrote back, telling him what had taken place and asking, nay, almost commanding, that he should restore an equal share of the property to Jack. Herbert replied that he should abide by his step-father's will. The living of Timberdale was not a rich one, and he wished Grace, his future wife, to be comfortable. "Herbert was always intensely selfish," groaned Aunt Dean. Look on which side she would there was no comfort.

The *Rose of Delhi*, Captain Tanerton, sailed out of port again, carrying also with her the captain's wife. And Aunt Dean was left to bemoan her fate and wish she had never meddled to shape out other people's destiny. Better, as Alice said, that she had left that to God.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

A LITTLE patch of grass ; an unkept walk ;
 Dark ivy creeping up the old brick wall ;
 A stunted lilac bush ; some lopped-off trees ;
 A chapel window overlooking all :—
 Gloomy and circumscribed the view, they say ;
 But what says she who sees it day by day ?

Does she not love each polished ivy leaf ;
 Each golden spot of lichen ; ev'ry blade
 Of tender grass ; the clust'ring emerald tufts
 Of moss, with which the path is overlaid ;
 The upright poplars, bending to the breeze,
 With stately motion, all one certain way ;
 The sunshine tangled in their upper boughs,
 Or dancing in and out in happy play ?

Ah ! to the eyes informed with finer sense
 Is visible a world of wondrous grace,
 Where vulgar sight sees nought but vulgar things—
 Vast meanness crowded into narrow space.
This marks alone a heap of uncouth stones
 At the wall's angle, and a broken urn ;
Those only note, relieved against the shade,
 The feathery frond of dainty lady-fern ;
 The weather stains of orange, green, and red—
 Gay cov'let for a hard, uncomely bed.

Reclining on her lonely couch of pain,
 The owner of the gifted, earnest eyes,
 Forgets her suff'rings as she gazes out,
 Through her poor casement, on the changing skies—
 The piled-up clouds, like snowy mountain peaks ;
 The deep blue, quiv'ring with excess of light ;
 The fleecy cirri, tinged with rose of dawn ;
 The rainbow hues of eve ; the stars of night.

Even the chapel window, rude and bare,
 Seems but an entrance to the peace within
 God's holy temple, where His worshippers
 May lay before his feet their load of sin.
 The wooden belfry, and its rusty bell ;
 The plain gilt cross it proudly rears above—
 Rough sketch upon a liquid azure ground—
 Can vie with pictures rare, the heart to move.

For, to the spirit-ear, the silent bell
 Has tones which echo the angelic choir ;
 The Christian symbol, glist'ning in the sun,
 Kindles the smould'ring faith to glowing fire.
 Ah, eyes baptized with waters mystical,
 Which give the pow'r to pierce below the clay,
 And read strange meanings in each common weed—
 Fair promise in this world's most sad decay ;
 Ah, soul alive to all glad influence—
 Attuned to nature's sweetest harmony !
 Gaze through the dull back window, rapturous,
 Into the fairy-land of phantasy :
 The dreary area, grimly walled around,
 Is Eldorado—earth's enchanted ground.

EMMA RHODES.

WINNING THE GLOVES.

IT was Lady Leigh's kettle-drum, as she called her five o'clock tea. In the pleasant morning-room at Ashleigh she and Clare Arundel were seated luxuriously over a glorious fire, discussing tea, gossip, dress, the affairs of the nation in general, and of Ashleigh in particular.

The fire burned brilliantly, illuminating the pretty room, lighting up the choice pictures on the walls, and bringing unexpected gleams and points of brightness out of the old oak furniture; glancing now on the mediæval carving of a quaint old press, and anon dancing in curious sparkles and flashes of light on the silver and china of the tea-service; the pride and delight of Lady Leigh's heart.

"Cecile, who or what is the little gray-robed figure that haunts the west corridor?" asked Miss Arundel, handing her cup over for some more tea.

"Little gray-robed figure?" repeated Lady Leigh. "What do you mean, Clare?"

Miss Arundel laughed. "There is a tiny mite of a girl, dressed in soft misty gray, who haunts the west corridor. I have met her half a dozen times since I arrived this morning. Is she real flesh and blood or a fairy sprite?"

"You are talking in riddles," replied Lady Leigh, handing back the replenished tea-cup.

"No, I am not. The little mortal, or fairy, or whatever else she may be, possesses a marvellous pair of eyes; they have haunted me all day with their pleading, wistful look. I can't forget their expression, Cecile. Is this little misty gray figure quite canny?"

"I think you must mean Muriel Hastings, the children's governess. Now I remember, she has on a gray dress to-day. Yes, poor child, her history is sad enough to account for that curiously sorrowful look in her eyes."

"Any relation to your old friend Mr. Hastings, the great cotton man you used to talk so much about? Didn't he come to grief, or something of the sort, about a year ago?"

"Hush, Clare! He is dead. This is his daughter. You know he lost all his money through the American war. He was an honourable upright man, and the blow killed him. Yes, really killed him, Clare. His wife told me he was broken-hearted at the loss of his good name. He could not forget how many were ruined by his fall, through confiding in his well known integrity."

"And his daughter is the little gray spirit of the west corridor?"

"Yes. I was only too glad to have her for the children; she is wonderfully talented. There was a small provision for Mrs. Hastings and the children; but it is very small: she insisted on giving up to the creditors all the money settled on herself; and what is left would not be enough for all. So Muriel—who is a brave girl—resolved to be a governess; and as I said, I was only too glad to have her, and try to make her hard life as bearable as possible. She is painfully shy, and over-sensitive, and I am rather troubled about her these Christmas holidays."

"Why specially now?"

"Well, you see, since she came, we have been quite by ourselves, and her time has been taken up with the children, so I think she has had no opportunity to dwell upon her position; but now it is the children's holidays, and I cannot bear to think of her pining alone in the schoolroom. The house will be full of guests to-morrow. I shall be too busy to look after her, and she is far too shy to do anything but keep most determinedly in the background."

"Well, Cecile, don't trouble any more about that. I will take her under my wing, and will engage that she shall neither fret nor pine for the next fortnight. Of course she will be at the ball on Christmas Eve?"

"I don't know. I asked her to be present, but she seemed frightened to death at the idea. Do try to make her."

"Certainly I shall," answered Miss Arundel. "By the bye, whom have you coming to-morrow?"

"Oh, about twenty people. You know them all. Here is the list, but Major Assheton has been with us a week."

"Do you mean my old enemy, Captain Assheton of Delamere?"

"Yes, but he is Major Assheton now."

"And he has never got married yet?"

"No. You know how fastidious he is. I told him yesterday he expected perfection in the shape of an archangel; and he politely informed me archangels were not generally supposed to be of the feminine gender, and he'd be satisfied with an angel."

"Well, Cecile, I hope he may get one. It's well Frederick Hurst does not expect anything so seraphic; he'd be woefully disappointed with me," said Miss Arundel, laughing and colouring.

"I invited Mr. Hurst for Christmas, Clare," said Lady Leigh.

"Yes, thank you, Cecile. He wrote to tell me he would make his appearance on Christmas Eve. But now I am going to introduce myself to the little gray fairy." And rising, Miss Arundel left the room, walking with quick grace, and humming softly to herself:

"I was just nineteen when I first fell in love,
And I scribbled a deal of rhyme,
And I talked to myself in a shady grove,
And I thought I was quite sublime."

Which interesting ballad just lasted till she reached the schoolroom door.

While this conversation had been in progress, the little gray spirit was pacing up and down the schoolroom, with short agitated steps. Up and down, up and down, the steps getting shorter and quicker with every turn, and the poor little white face working and quivering with distress.

A lovely childish face it was, with wonderful, dark radiant eyes, the pleading, wistful look Miss Arundel had spoken of shining in their soft depths. Her hair gleamed in the fitful firelight like a golden glory round her head; beautiful hair, of a curious tint between red-brown and gold, wonderful for the infinite variety of light and shade in its waves and folds. She was small and slight in figure for her nineteen years, and as she restlessly paced the room, she certainly looked more like some forlorn stray fairy, than a poor little governess who had to fight a hard battle against poverty on her own account.

Not that the schoolroom had anything mean or shabby in its appointments. On the contrary; it was a large, pleasant room, with a great bow-window, comfortably carpeted with crimson tapestry, and fitted up like a library; all that might be shabby in schoolbooks and slates neatly put out of sight for the Christmas holidays. There were good engravings on the wall, a few well chosen ornaments, and a grand piano, with a music-stand. The room, lighted up by the red glow of the fire, looked pleasant and cosy.

But the little golden-haired governess was in too much trouble to notice outward surroundings, however desirable they might be. She paced up and down, up and down, in restless monotony. Presently the short agitated steps ceased. She threw herself into a chair, and burst into a passion of tears, for several minutes sobbing bitterly.

"Oh what shall I do? What shall I do?" she wailed out. "This bitter disgrace and shame is killing me; it is more than I can bear. Oh papa, papa, why did I not die with you?" The poor little face was quivering and convulsed with distress under the small hands in which it was hidden. "What shall I do?" thought the poor girl aloud. "The house will be so full of strangers to-morrow, and on every fresh face I can read the story of our miserable disgrace and failure. Oh what shall I do? If I had only died!"

"You are over-sensitive, Miss Hastings," said a deep, earnest voice. "Believe me, death is but a cowardly way of fleeing from the troubles of life."

Muriel started, and looked up hastily. During her paroxysm of grief the door had opened, unheard by her, admitting a gentleman. A stately, soldier-like figure, with a grave, earnest face; a face to be trusted, if only for the expression of calm strength and the frank, kindly eyes. Not a young man by any means; he looked quite

forty, and his looks spoke the truth. It was Major Assheton of Delamere.

He closed the door and advanced into the room. "I beg your pardon, Miss Hastings. I did not wish to disturb you, but I wanted a German dictionary; there is not one in the library, and Lady Leigh directed me here. Now won't you tell me what this great trouble is?" continued he, earnestly. "I don't like to see you in such distress. You know a sorrow becomes only half of one by being shared with another."

Muriel hesitated, then glanced up at him, her dark eyes shining brighter and larger through the tears which nearly overflowed them. The grave kindly look she met seemed to reassure her.

"It is only the old trouble, Major Assheton. You know about papa," she whispered, "and—and——"

"And what?"

"The disgrace," sobbed she, the tears quite overflowing.

"I know about your father, and how he died. It is a pitiful story; that of the great noble heart, broken for loss of a name. But I don't know about the disgrace."

"It was the failure of the mills I meant; the shame, the degradation," sobbed Muriel, her poor little frame shaking with distress, the tremulous mouth quivering.

"You are over-sensitive; and, excuse me, Miss Hastings, but you are evidently almost morbid on that subject. There was no disgrace in the failure of your father's mills. You know it was caused by the American war and the cotton famine; his property lost its value. He did all that man could do to save others. Himself he never seemed to think of."

"I know, I know all that," sobbed Muriel.

"I assure you," continued he, "your father has never had a word of reproach cast at him. But for his exertions it would indeed have been a disastrous misfortune; he saved others at the expense of himself. He was a noble man. I knew him years ago. My child," added he, gravely but kindly, "I think his daughter should not be the one to link his name with the word disgrace."

"Oh, Major Assheton, I did not mean that," said Muriel, starting up, "indeed I did not."

"No, I think not," answered he, smiling at her earnestness. "But now will you not try to put this idea altogether from you? Believe me there is no cause for such distress. It is not right to shut yourself up here, till you grow morbid with excitement and misery."

"I will try," said Muriel. "But there are so many people coming, and oh, Major Assheton, it is dreadful to be pointed out as the daughter of the bankrupt Mr. Hastings. You don't know the misery."

"This is absurd," replied he; "the very height of self-torture. Miss Hastings, you are——"

"Where is she—where is Queen Mab?" interrupted a laughing voice, as the door opened and Miss Arundel came in dressed for dinner. "Major Assheton, how do you do? Miss Hastings, I am Clare Arundel. Two hours ago I took you for a fairy sprite, and called you Queen Mab. I shall keep the name with your permission."

Muriel raised her eyes shyly, but, meeting nothing more alarming than a friendly, admiring gaze, said softly, "I am sure I shall not mind the name from you."

"Then that is settled, and you are Queen Mab from this day forward. I elect myself your privy councillor, or lord chancellor, or prime minister, or any other important and disagreeable functionary who has the power of ordering your majesty to go and dress for dinner."

"But I am not coming down to dinner," pleaded Muriel, with an access of shyness.

"Indeed you are. Queens always obey their prime ministers, and I order Queen Mab to show us the light of her countenance this evening."

Ordered off in this half bantering, half commanding style, Muriel had no choice but to obey. She left the room, rather unwillingly, to achieve a hasty toilette.

"Miss Arundel," said Major Assheton, as the door closed after her, "that poor girl is fretting herself into a fever about the disgrace she supposes attached to her name because of her father's failure."

"I guessed as much. Well, Major Assheton, it rests with us to prevent it. For the next fortnight at any rate, she shall not be too much alone. I look for your aid."

"It shall readily be given," he replied.

So half an hour afterwards, when Muriel appeared in the drawing-room, in a dainty white muslin dress—looking, Miss Arundel declared, more Queen Mabbish than ever—she was not suffered to relapse into shyness and embarrassment. Under the influence of Lady Leigh's kindness, Clare's merry banter, and Major Assheton's grave care, the childish face and wistful, sweet eyes lighted up into a power of beauty that had seemed impossible to the morbid, melancholy young lady of the schoolroom.

It was the week before Christmas. Sir Harry and Lady Leigh always gathered together a large annual meeting of friends and relations at Ashleigh, to keep it in true old-fashioned hospitality. Every day brought fresh arrivals till the large rambling old house was filled to overflowing.

It was the advent of these strangers that had so frightened poor Muriel; but Miss Arundel kept her word, and the little gray spirit was not allowed to indulge her shyness, or suffered to feel solitary. She was hunted up for all the merry riding, driving, and walking parties of that merry week. No one was allowed to feel or look dull in Clare Arundel's company. She left Muriel to her own devices in the morning, saying that Queens were not supposed to be visible till noon, but after

luncheon Queen Mab must be at the beck and call of her laughter-loving prime minister, for all the fun and pleasure going on among the large party staying at Ashleigh. She was shielded, too, from all annoyance; and it spoke wonders for Clare's kindness and tact that the over-sensitive Muriel was never once wounded by any chance allusion or careless word from any of the party, who, indeed, all fell in love with the gentle, child-like girl.

The mornings Muriel spent in the pleasant schoolroom, which she considered her own special domain.

It was curious how often accident seemed to bring Major Assheton there also. Curious how studiously he took to reading German. Curious that however often the German dictionary was carried into the library, it always found its way back into the schoolroom before morning. Curious how he suddenly discovered a hitherto unknown talent for etching; curious that no Indian ink seemed to suit him except that particular little black stumpy piece in Muriel's colour box. Curious how he sought her interest in his pet geological hobby. It was uncommonly dry, and hard to understand, but she seemed to take very kindly to its intricacies. Most curious of all that he didn't find out he was falling head over ears in love; didn't know how sweet Muriel was winding herself round his heart; didn't discover what a thrill of rapture passed through him when her shy, wistful eyes were uplifted to his. Major Assheton felt secure, in his forty years, from any attacks of the little blind god, and would have laughed to scorn any suggestions that he was already a victim, though indeed no one would have dared to hint such a thing to the grave, stately Major; and as for himself, he was simply carrying out Miss Arundel's instructions, not to let Muriel fret herself to death in the schoolroom. So he deluded himself very happily for a time: and probably Muriel too: for though she felt happier than she had ever been in her life before, she had not learnt to ascribe the cause to any one person in particular.

So the bright days sped on till the twenty-fourth of December, Christmas Eve.

"Queen Mab, what are you going to wear to-night?" said Clare Arundel, coming into the schoolroom in the afternoon.

Muriel was seated at the piano, playing the Moonlight Sonata with exquisite taste and skill. For a wonder she was alone, excepting little Alice Leigh. Major Assheton had joined the shooting party that morning, as a means of putting a stop to some banter about his idleness during the last week.

"Wear!" said Muriel, turning round. "Oh, I don't think I can be present at the ball, Miss Arundel."

"Nonsense, Queen Mab. You really give your prime minister no end of trouble. Of course you will be present. Now just come and show me your dress, like a good Queen; you told me you had one."

"Yes, I had it before papa died. I only wore it once," answered Muriel. "But I don't think I can go, really, Miss Arundel."

"Miss Hastings, it's a case of necessity. Where Miss Arundel commands, you cannot refuse. So come along."

With another faint protest Muriel was led off to her room. When there, she opened a wardrobe and took out a dress of gleaming, glistening white tulle, all frothed and frothed, and puffed and puckered into a cloud of snow. An irresistible dress, that made one long to put it on.

"What a beauty!" said Clare. "Queen Mab, you will outshine us all. I feel already as if my heavy white silk were a failure; it looks clumsy beside this fairy gossamer cloud."

"Is it too fine for a governess?" said Muriel, with a look of distress.

"No, no. What a little self-torturer you are, Queen Mab. No one in the holidays ever remembers you are a governess, excepting yourself."

"But Lady Leigh may not like it. Isn't it too conspicuous for my station?"

"Bless the child and her station! you're as good as the rest of us; better, I dare say. I suppose we have all got grandfathers, but I have my doubts about great grandfathers. Haven't you found out yet what awful radicals we all are at Ashleigh?"

Muriel laughed. "I don't know about the radicals unless it means being very kind to me. But do you really think Lady Leigh will not mind?"

"I'll answer for Lady Leigh. Now for the flowers for your hair. I shall not be easily pleased. Your golden aureole won't do to be covered up with a garden of flaming red roses. I'd rather you sported a wreath of dandelions so long as they were natural."

Muriel dived into a drawer, and, after a search which turned all its contents upside down, she produced a morocco case, containing a tiny wreath of silver ivy, in fine filigree, exquisitely wrought.

"Just the thing," said Clare, placing it lightly on the wavy, shining hair. "Now you want only a star-tipped wand to be a veritable faerie queen."

"Here are some more sprays," said Muriel, taking three or four out of the box as she spoke.

"Ah! I shall just twine these into a circlet for your throat. What delicate filigree it is; I never saw any so beautiful before."

"Papa brought it from Malta for me long ago," said Muriel, her sweet eyes clouding over.

Clare stooped and kissed her. "Poor little one," said she; "now come across the corridor into my room. I have some silver twist which will just do to fasten this ivy."

The corridors at Ashleigh were an institution: two long wide passages, running the length of the house, called respectively the east and west corridors. They were lighted at either end by stained glass

windows, in the recesses of which were placed long low couches of crimson velvet. In the winter large fires were kept burning in the old-fashioned tiled grates, easy chairs scattered round about ; so that these wide large passages were pleasant lounging places, and a general resort for a wet or dull day.

As Muriel and Clare crossed the corridor on their way to Miss Arundel's room, they came upon Major Assheton fast asleep on one of the couches. He had evidently just come in from the shooting expedition, for his gun lay on the floor at his feet, and the splashed and muddy condition of his dress showed signs of hard work among the pheasants and partridges. He was in an uncomfortable attitude, half sitting, half lying, just as he had thrown himself down on the inviting couch.

"Fast asleep, I declare," whispered Miss Arundel, laughing. "Now Queen Mab, won't you win a pair of gloves? Be quick, before he wakes."

"Oh! I could not," said Muriel, drawing back towards her room with a distressed face; "indeed I could not."

"Little prude," cried Clare, "then I will."

She advanced on tiptoe as she spoke, and heedless or forgetful of the impropriety, stooped over him and kissed him lightly on the forehead; then ran swiftly after Muriel down the corridor, and gained the bedroom, just as the Major became sufficiently wide awake to see the skirt of a gray dress disappear swiftly out of sight into what he knew to be Muriel's room. Unfortunately, it happened that day that Miss Arundel wore a gray dress of exactly the same material and colour as Muriel's. Unconsciously, too, she carried in her hand the sprays of silver ivy, and as she stooped over the Major one of them dropped from her grasp, and fell at his feet beside the gun.

Now, as Lady Leigh had said, Major Assheton was fastidious to a degree concerning the modesty and delicacy of women. He had a most chivalrous reverence and veneration for them, consequently his standard of their dignity and grace was a very high, almost an ideal, one. Any appearance of forwardness, or departure from the strictest letter of propriety, was condemned. He had been quite wide awake enough to know that some one had kissed him, but not sufficiently quick to discover who it was excepting by a glimpse of a gray dress, and the ivy spray.

He stooped and picked up the ivy with a grave look.

"It is not like her," thought he; "she is too shy and modest; there are several gray dresses in the house. I will wait and see who wears the ivy to-night; that will tell me who has done me this unsolicited honour."

But his faith in Muriel was considerably shaken when he entered the ball-room a few hours later on, and saw her standing crowned with a tiny wreath of the self-same dainty filigree ivy, a circlet of the same

clasping her white throat and gleaming in the cloudy folds of her dress.

She was radiantly lovely as she stood in the brilliant light, the colour mantling in richer crimson to her cheeks, and a softer, shyer light to her sweet eyes as he approached. She was already the centre of a crowd of admirers, but a wistful look sought his face as he came up, as if asking his wonted protection and care.

He glanced at the silver ivy, turned on his heel, and walked away. "I suppose she would kiss any one of that crowd of men for a pair of gloves," thought the fastidious Major, drawing his own conclusions all wrong.

So poor Muriel fell from the high pinnacle she had held in his estimation. He certainly only regarded it in the light of a girlish frolic, but still the bloom was brushed off the flower; the delicacy and fragrance had gone. She had kissed him unasked, and in his fastidious reverence he revolted from the unsolicited favour.

Muriel saw him turn away, with a look of blank dismay. What had she done to offend him? Her pleasure was spoilt for that evening, though in sheer desperation she went through dance after dance, and laughed and chatted with a gaiety she was far from feeling.

"She is just like all the rest," said Major Assheton to himself, as she floated past him. But notwithstanding his anger he was intensely jealous; it aggravated him supremely to see any one else dancing with her; in fact, like the dog in the manger, he would neither dance with her nor have allowed others to do so, if he could have helped it. So he watched the fairy figure with considerably more pain than pleasure.

Muriel was a decided success that night, as her card with its double row of names could testify. For once, she forgot her shyness; for once, as Clare Arundel said, forgot she was only the governess. She held her own gallantly in the flow of laughing banter and merry repartee that forms the staple of dancing conversation; only disturbed by the Major's grave looks as he sat in a corner gnawing his moustache and watching every movement with jealous minuteness. But though he watched narrowly he held aloof; never asked her to dance; never took her down to supper as he had intended doing all the week. Not that Muriel seemed to want him; she was beset with admirers. How much rather she would have been leaning on the arm of the gloomy Major Assheton than on that of Mr. Vernon, she alone knew. To say the Major was frantically jealous, was to use a mild term; as the night wore on, he became unmitigatedly and intensely devoured by the green-eyed monster.

He would have liked to have seen Muriel sitting in a corner also, alone and neglected. Then he would have gone up to her, made her confess her sins, and would have vouchsafed his forgiveness for the enormity of her conduct. So they would have been friends again as

they were before. It was certainly aggravating to have the tables turned upon him in this style. To see shy Muriel the reigning Queen, and himself sulking in a corner. Of course the Major did not know how he had fallen into the toils of the little blind god, and put all his solicitude for Muriel down to his fatherly interest in her. Poor deluded man !

He held aloof the next day, Christmas Day though it was. He never once approached her, and no Christmas 'greeting was offered to her by him.

The week sped on in the same style. He spent no more pleasant mornings in the schoolroom. The German dictionary took up its permanent abode in the library, likewise the Indian ink, not to mention the book on Geology. When unavoidably thrown together, he showed her the most elaborate politeness, the stateliest civility, worse by many degrees than downright rudeness, for that could be resented openly ; this could only be endured.

Muriel—quite unconscious of the cause of her disgrace ; astonished and distressed by his manner ; far too shy to break through the armour of his reserve by speaking—cast many a pleading, wistful glance at him ; glances very hard to be resisted. But Mr. Vernon was still at Ashleigh and spared no pains to win Muriel's favour. The Major, still jealous, accused Muriel of flirting, and at every soft, shy glance seeking his face, said to himself, "Of course she looks at that fellow just in the same way." Which was very unjust, as Muriel had turned a deaf ear to Mr. Vernon from the first, and he, poor man, would have given a good deal for one of the shy looks that fell to the share of the fastidious, hard-hearted Major.

So the Christmas week wore away. The Old Year rang out its sad chimes, and the New Year advanced in the saucy independence of youth, with clanging, noisy peals of triumph.

It was the custom at Ashleigh to give New Year's gifts. Generally breakfast was a pleasant, lounging, procrastinated meal, lasting from half-past eight to eleven. Everybody came down when they liked, sat where they liked, breakfasted as they liked, and went away when they liked, regardless of other people. But on New Year's Day more ceremony was held. Breakfast was ready punctually at eight, and everybody was expected to be down. Their respective seats were allotted to the guests, and the presents, delivered beforehand to the servants, were placed on the plates or piled up on them according to size and quantity.

"Here is your place, Queen Mab, by me," said Clare Arundel to Muriel, as she entered the room on New Year's morning. "A happy New Year to you."

"Thank you, Clare. A very happy one to you. Are all these for me?" said she, as she took her seat, regarding with pleased surprise the heap of parcels, big and little, piled on her plate.

"Yes. Your subjects all bring offerings to their queen. Do open that queer oblong packet," said Miss Arundel. "I am dying of curiosity to know what it can possibly be."

Muriel drew the parcel from the heap, undid the wrappings, and took out a glove-box of brightest blue velvet, ornamented with gold, her initials in raised work on the lid. Blushing with surprise and pleasure, she pressed the spring, and opened the box. It was full of delicately tinted gloves. On the top lay a spray of her own silver ivy, to which a slip of paper was fastened.

Muriel opened the paper and read the words: "To Miss Hastings. The value of a kiss."

She looked perplexed. "'Value of a kiss!' What can it mean?" The blood rushed in torrents to her cheeks as she read the words, spread over brow and neck; even her finger tips glowed. Raising her eyes, with a half puzzled, half indignant look, she met those of Major Assheton watching her intently.

In a moment the truth rushed to her mind, doubly dyeing her crimson cheeks. "That he should believe it was I, Muriel Hastings, who kissed him. That he could believe it for a minute!" thought she. "Oh, it is too much."

She sat in mute, indignant misery, not daring to look up. How long the breakfast seemed; how hard the struggle to swallow a cup of coffee and strip of toast; how hard to open the other parcels and give her thanks in an audible tone! Clare was luckily engaged with her own presents, and forgot to ask again for the oblong parcel.

Major Assheton watched the distressed face and agitated efforts to keep up appearances with some compunction. He wished to catch her eyes, but she never raised them again. Her cheeks burned red and hot with blushes, her mouth was tremulous with wounded and indignant feeling.

"I have been too hard on her," thought he. "Poor little thing! after all, it was only a girlish frolic."

He sought her in the schoolroom after breakfast, but she was not there. He waited patiently all the morning, but she never came. She had rushed off to her room in an agony of distress, and was pacing it up and down, as we saw her that first night pace up and down the schoolroom, shaken by a passion of sobs: her bosom heaving, her small hands pressed to her heart to still its wild throbbing.

"To think he could believe I kissed him! Oh, the shame," she cried, her poor little sensitive face quivering. "He should not have thought it, he should not, he should not. What shall I do? I can never face him again."

She threw herself on her knees by the bedside, and wrapped her face in the quilt to stifle the sobbing. But for long the little fragile form was shaken again and again by a storm of distress.

She was still kneeling when a tap came to the door. She did not hear it, so the door opened and Miss Arundel came in, dressed for walking, a pair of skates in her hand.

"I want—why, Queen Mab, Muriel, what is the matter? What is it?" she repeated, as Muriel jumped up, showing her quivering face, white with the paroxysm of tears.

Miss Arundel came up, and put her arm round her. "Muriel, what is it? Tell me, dear."

Muriel pointed silently to the box which lay on the table.

"The glove-box," said Clare. "I don't understand."

"Look," whispered Muriel, the tears falling again.

Miss Arundel opened the box, took up the spray of silver ivy, read the motto, "Value of a kiss," attached to it, and comprehended in an instant the mistake that Major Assheton had made.

"And he thought it was you?"

"Yes."

"My darling queen, how thoughtless I have been! But it shall all be put right."

She kissed Muriel gently. "I missed you at luncheon, and came to drag you off for skating. But you shall rest here instead, so as to be ready for dinner this evening."

"Not to-night, dear," pleaded Muriel, steadily.

"Well, it shall be as you like for to-day. Poor child," said Clare, smoothing the ruffled shining hair, "will you ever forgive me?"

"Yes, oh, yes; it was not you."

"Well, I was the cause, so now I must go and repair the mischief I have done. I shall have to eat no end of humble pie with the Major. He won't spare me, I know. Queen Mab, you don't know the ludicrous state of consternation I am in at the very thought of the grave, polite way in which he'll listen to my story. Any other man of my own acquaintance would have felt rather flattered than not," added Miss Arundel, naïvely.

She took up the glove-box and left the room. The Major was not easily found. She searched in vain through drawing-room, morning-room, billiard-room, library; and in despair even ventured a peep into the smoking-room.

"He must have gone out, tiresome man," said she. "I'll try the schoolroom as a last resource. I can't say I like doing this at all. It's rather awkward to have to go deliberately up to a man, and tell him you kissed him. I declare I won't do it; I won't. I'll carry the war into his camp and accuse him of ungentlemanly conduct. Serve him right, for his suspicions of Muriel. I won't confess; no, I won't; but he shall not believe it was Muriel."

So cogitating, Miss Arundel opened the schoolroom door. Major Assheton was there, showing his stately height by a fidgety walking up

and down. He looked very grave, and not a little perplexed, as if not quite sure that he had done the right thing.

He glanced up as Clare came in and deposited the velvet glove-box with considerable ostentation on the table ; ceased his fidgety walk, and stood staring at the box with an air of extreme astonishment, which Clare enjoyed immensely.

"This box is for you, Major Assheton ; returned with thanks," said she, with an elaborately grave air.

He bowed stiffly. "Will you please to explain ?" said he.

But Miss Arundel was not going to explain any more than she could possibly help. To avoid his question she asked another.

"Do you always pay your debts by proxy ?" she demanded.

"Of course I don't," he returned, grimly, as if he could not and would not understand a joke just then. "Why do you ask ?"

"Because I beg leave to state that this box looks uncommonly like it. I suppose you owe somebody a pair of gloves, but you've paid these in the wrong place. Miss Hastings was the proxy."

"I don't understand," said he, stiffly.

"He's determined I shall confess and eat humble pie to him, and I won't," thought she. "It's too absurd to have to explain to a man that you are very sorry you kissed him. I'll turn the tables on him yet."

"You don't understand, Major Assheton ? May I ask if you think it acting as a gentleman in falsely accusing one lady, and wilfully refusing to understand another ?"

"Will you be more explicit ?" asked he, coldly.

"No. I will not explain further than that when you sent that box of gloves to Miss Hastings, with the motto inside—a vulgar, ungentlemanly motto, Major Assheton—you did an ungenerous, cowardly thing. It was a stab in the dark. You accused her in your own mind of indelicacy and forwardness ; you have wounded her deeply. She would never have vindicated herself, and I must do it for her. You have chosen in your absurd fastidiousness to make a great fuss about a very trifling affair, and now when I assure you that Muriel Hastings had neither part nor parcel in the matter, you refuse to believe me, and coolly ask me to explain. Is that generous ? Is that gentlemanly ?" asked she, in wonderfully indignant tones.

Miss Arundel was not very coherent or lucid in her accusations. "I may as well accuse him in pretty set terms while I am about it," thought she. "It will be all the better for me in the long run."

Major Assheton bore this storm with an aggravatingly quiet air.

"I did not believe without proof, Miss Arundel," said he. "Of course since you accuse me so indignantly, it is useless to ask you to tell me how the ivy spray happened to fall at my feet ; or how the only person in view when I awoke happened to have on a gray dress precisely like Miss Hastings' ?"

"Major Assheton, you are incorrigibly dense, not to say incorrigibly suspicious. There are a dozen gray dresses in the house, any one of which might be mistaken for Muriel's. As to the ivy," added she, laughing and blushing, "you will have to take my word that it was not Muriel's hand that dropped it. My private opinion is that it was that ubiquitous animal the cat."

Major Assheton tried to look satisfied.

"I think you ought to have known Muriel better," she continued, "than to suppose she would kiss you unasked, even if you were asleep. It's no such very great crime after all, but at least she's far too shy to have done it. I am only too vexed with you for believing it for a moment."

At any rate the Major believed it no longer; indeed he had a very shrewd opinion not only who didn't do it, but who did. However, he said nothing; so Clare continued, looking virtuously indignant: "I shall not condescend to explain any more. My mission is to return the box of gloves, with Miss Hastings' thanks, and to inform you that you have unpardonably insulted one lady by your suspicions, and irretrievably offended another by your unbelief in her word."

So saying Miss Arundel swept out of the room with an elaborate air of injured dignity, which ended in a hearty laugh as she reached Lady Leigh's dressing-room, and gave her a ludicrous account of the scene, with a few embellishments.

"Now, Cecile, don't you think I managed wonderfully? I did not eat a morsel of the unpalatable pie, and his serene high-and-mightiness is in a state of blissful ignorance as to whether it was I or not. If you'd only seen his face when I accused him so roundly! But now I must go and comfort Queen Mab."

A few hours afterwards, Muriel, looking still very white and distressed, crossed the west corridor to the schoolroom. It was half-past seven, and the poor child thought everybody must be safe in the dining-room by this time. The room, as she entered, was all aglow with a splendid fire, and on a round table, drawn close up to it, was spread an inviting-looking tea-table; the silver and china of the delicate service all shining in the glancing light.

Muriel sat wearily down on a low chair. She never noticed a stately figure standing in the shadow of the curtains of the large bow window. A figure that had waited patiently there for her all day. She sat several minutes, unheeding the dainty tea, her weary head leaning back on the cushion, the wistful, sorrowful eyes closed. Presently Major Assheton emerged from his retreat, walked to the fireplace, and stood looking down on the small figure in the low chair.

"Miss Hastings," said he, hesitatingly, for she had taken no manner of notice of him.

She looked up, revealing the poor little white face, with the sweet eyes full of wounded feeling.

The proud Major's next proceeding was curiously humble for him.

He knelt down at the feet of the little gray spirit, took her hand, and gazing with a troubled, passionate look into her eyes, said in tremulous, husky tones, "Miss Hastings, Muriel, will you ever forgive me?"

She burst into tears. "It was very cruel," she sobbed.

He put his arm round her. "My darling, don't cry so bitterly—indeed I cannot forgive myself for causing you all this trouble. But, oh, Muriel, what shall I do if you won't forgive me? My darling, don't you know how I love you?" he said in caressing tones, and drawing her nearer to him.

She made a slight effort of escape, almost shivering at his touch.

"Oh, Muriel," said he, passionately, "it cannot be that you do not love me?"

There was no answer, and he could not see the shy, happy light in her eyes.

"Muriel, you torture me. Speak one word, even if it be of reproach. I have no right to ask for forgiveness, after having so insulted you by my suspicions."

She raised her sweet, shy eyes to his. The world of love shining in their depths was sufficient without a word.

He folded her closely in his arms. "My little one, my wife," murmured he, caressingly, as he bent down his head to kiss her soft lips. "Am I quite forgiven?"

"Yes, oh, yes, quite," said she, nestling her head on his shoulder, the pale cheeks growing rosy enough under his earnest gaze.

"Give me a token then, Muriel. I ask it this time," said he, significantly. She shook her head.

"It is my right," urged he, bending his face close to hers.

She raised her eyes, shyly, but the entreating face was not to be withstood, so she gave him the daintiest breath of a kiss; one gentle touch of her soft lips.

He laughed at the tiny touch. "Now, Muriel, you may take the gloves with a clear conscience," said he, handing her the blue velvet box. And in deeper, tenderer tones, he added "This glad New Year has never before brought so precious a gift as my own sweet wife."

"Ah, well, in this case I suppose virtue's its own reward, but I think on the whole I am very badly used," was Miss Arundel's comment. "I risked my reputation on an unappreciated salute; I fought a gallant fight for distressed beauty; I nearly had to devour a most unpalatable humble pie; and I've not even the consolation of winning the gloves."

WRECKED.

SHE stood upon the balcony and looked out seaward. The wind blew in with freshness on its wings, and fluttered her pretty yellow hair about her face. It touched her cheeks; they grew rosy, and her eyes sparkled. The crisp, bracing air was as good as a draught of wine.

The ocean boomed against the beach. Its low, deep music was like the sound of an organ's diapason heard afar off. Olive Gresham loved it. It spoke to her soul, and gave her higher, better thoughts.

She looked little more than a girl, but she was Mrs. Gresham, and had been a wife nearly twelve months. She and her husband had come to this pretty sea-side place—we will call it Seaview—for a month or two's bracing. They were staying at one of those pleasant houses, half hotel, half boarding-house, that are now so common. Mrs. Gresham enjoyed it immensely: the whole party assembled were sociable, nice people; it seemed but like a large private guest-house, where all are friends.

"The sea is angry this afternoon," she murmured, turning her thoughtful face to the wide expanse lifting itself and roaring. "I hope there are no frail barks upon it to be wrecked."

Poor girl! There are wrecks on land as well as sea. As she might one day find to her cost.

Presently there arose a sound of carriage wheels, driving up to the great entrance door. Mrs. Gresham turned her head to look. The carriage contained a man and woman, as she could see in the distance.

"It must be they. That must be John."

Yes, it was. The man in the carriage was her husband, John Gresham; the woman was Miss Dorne. Miss Dorne was expected at the hotel to join some friends: and Mr. Gresham, who had known her well in the years gone by, had offered to meet her at the station. Olive had spent the time wondering whether she should like this Gertrude Dorne, of whom she heard them talk so much, and asking herself why there should be a silent instinct in her heart against her, and why she dreaded her coming.

She was a tall and handsome woman. Olive saw that, as her husband helped her to alight. A face like Cleopatra's—dark, rich, and olive-tinted. Eyes full of a deep and subtle fire. Hair of purplish blackness, coiled about her head in a queenly way that became her more than a crown would have done. A dress of some dark material fitted her tall form closely and set off her rich beauty well. Olive watched it all; herself drawn back, that she might not seem to stare.

"No wonder half the men are crazy about her," Olive thought: "and

some of them were saying last night that it is so. Such beauty as hers is enough to turn their heads, let alone their hearts."

Mr. Gresham entered the hotel with the lady on his arm. Olive quitted the room to greet her. Outside the door she met Mrs. Davenal; one of those women who see everything without appearing to have regard for anybody's business but their own. She would have made a splendid acquisition to the female detective police, had there been such a thing in existence at Seaview. She stopped Olive as they met.

"Be careful of that Miss Dorne," she whispered. "I believe her to be a dangerous woman, perfectly unscrupulous. Of course, this is only for your private ear, Mrs. Gresham: but I could not resist giving you a warning."

"Thank you all the same," was Olive's surprised rejoinder; "but what harm can she do me?"

"My dear, I was thinking of your husband. Report goes that Gertrude Dorne once made havoc with his heart. I don't know how that may have been: but I do know that she is not to be trusted; that she cares not what mischief she does in her jealous love of—of admiration. You are young and innocent, my dear, with little experience of these shady sides of life: but I would say, don't let your husband get into her coils if you can help it."

"She—she is very beautiful, is she not?" stammered Olive, struck with a sudden panic.

"She is very handsome: I don't call beautiful the word for her. Men get crazy over such a woman as Miss Dorne, sometimes: some have over *her*. There is something about her that charms them or bewitches them—I hardly know which. Hush! here she is."

Miss Dorne, with one or two of her friends, came along the corridor. Mr. Gresham followed. He halted when he saw his wife.

"Olive, this is Miss Dorne. Miss Dorne, allow me to present you to my wife."

Olive held out her hand and smiled a welcome, saying some pretty words. "She is not nice looking as regards expression," thought Olive. "At least to please me."

"I am so happy to meet your wife, John," said Miss Dorne, taking Olive's hand. "You look at me, my dear!—you are wondering to hear me call him 'John' so familiarly: but we used to be friends once, he and I: and I have never learnt to say 'Mr. Gresham.'"

She had a soft and mellow voice. It was full of music, and vibrated on the ear pleasantly as the tinkle of silver bells. Keeping it under perfect control, she knew how to use it effectively. Miss Dorne was evidently a woman who knew her resources and how to turn them to the best effect.

"John," whispered Olive, as the young lady swept upstairs to her

chamber, "how is it that you never told me about Miss Dorne, and this old intimacy with her?"

"How was it? My dear Olive, I suppose I never thought to tell you. There was nothing much to tell."

Miss Dorne came down to dinner in a toilette as elaborate as any ever turned out by Madame Elise. It was the custom of the place to dress: and very absurd of the place too; but none had ever been dressed as she was. She took her place at once as an acknowledged queen in society. Some few of the visitors she knew: the rest soon begged to know her. In conversation she was brilliant and witty, capable of holding her own on almost any subject under discussion. Consequently she was a favourite with all the gentlemen: as indeed she would have been had she possessed no attractions but her face and her exquisite voice.

After dinner the long drawing-room windows were thrown open to the cool breeze from the sea, and the company adjourned thither.

It was a beautiful night. The moonlight drifted whitely over the landscape, and touched the sea with mellow splendour. The beat of the waves upon the shore came distinctly on the wind like a strain of deep and solemn music. Overhead the stars shone like silver sparks in the blue sky. Olive Gresham, standing at one of the windows, took in the beauty of the quiet scene.

"We must get Miss Dorne to sing for us," some one said, in Olive's hearing. "She is a splendid singer."

"How do you know?" asked another.

"She used to be when I met her a year or two ago."

"She'll sing, I daresay, fast enough. These good singers don't require much asking. Do look how the men are round her!"

Olive came in from the balcony, and stole a glance to where the speaker pointed. Nearly all the gentlemen had gathered about Miss Dorne, who was dealing her smiles and her words amidst them. Not John Gresham. He sat by a distant table, looking at a newspaper.

"Mrs. Davenal must have been mistaken," thought Olive. "I wish she would not say such things."

A young lady came out, and she and Olive sat down together in a corner of the balcony, inhaling the sea breeze in the sultry night. They had been at school together, these two; and they began talking of old days, and of the time past.

"Olive, you have never told me about your marriage."

"About my marriage!" echoed Mrs. Gresham. "What about it, Kate?"

"How did you become acquainted with Mr. Gresham?"

"He came to the place a stranger, and I met him at a party. I—I had never seen any one I liked so much—I don't mind saying so, Kate, now I am his wife—and he seemed to be attracted by me.

Before we had met half a dozen times, he went to papa and asked for me. There was no objection : he is very well off, you know : and we were married directly. Mamma grumbled : there was not time to get my wedding things ready, she said : but he would have his way."

"And you are happy, Olive?"

"Oh yes. He indulges me in everything."

"Some one, talking of him the other day, said he was so cold."

"Cold? Well, I think he is that."

"And he seems to treat you so much as a child, Olive."

Olive blushed. The fact had vexed her often. "I'm a great deal younger than he is, Kate."

"How long shall you stay at Seaview?"

"Just as long as John pleases. His time is his own."

"We shall be here a month longer, I think. My aunt says the air suits her better than any she has ever tried. Just look at that blue light being thrown up from that vessel at sea, Olive! What's it for, I wonder?"

Passing about the balcony to obtain a better view of the ship in question, they got to the other end of it. In a low chair against the open window there, sat Miss Dorne. Olive glanced in, and saw her husband bending over her. Keen Mrs. Davenal—keen in regard to observation—stood opposite, glancing at them. There arose a sudden clamour at the piano for Miss Dorne. If Miss Dorne would but go and sing!

"I suppose I shall have to gratify them," she said, looking up into Mr. Gresham's face with her dark Eastern eyes. "Do you ever sing 'At the Orchard Stile' now, John?"

"No," he answered. "I have never sung it or heard of it since—since that summer."

Olive fancied that there was something like a regret in his voice. What summer did he mean? Had it held disappointment for him of pleasant dreams and hopes; and had Miss Dorne anything to do with it? The words of Mrs. Davenal rose up like a nightmare.

"John, I'll sing that song now if you will help me," said Miss Dorne. "You used to sing it with me, you know, in that good old time!"

"I will try," he said, as he held out his arm to take her to the piano. "But I cannot sing as I sang then, Gertrude."

"He calls her Gertrude!" thought the young wife. "They must have known each other very well."

Miss Dorne sat down, and touched the keys softly. An exquisite touch had she: firm and correct, and capable of expressing her best feelings. She played a simple prelude, winning from its plaintive pathos, and began to sing.

A silence fell upon the room. It was a song that had once been very popular. One of those little waifs that come from no one knows

where, drift through the world for a while, and then disappear as suddenly as they came. Olive had never heard it: and never, she thought, had heard anything so exquisite.

She watched them both; she could not help it—her husband and Miss Dorne. He stood at the piano, his eyes fixed on her face: *not* staring at her, not seeing her; but in utter abstraction. He quite forgot that he had promised to sing. That he was buried in some dream of the past, Olive doubted not. Then he came out of the dream with a start, and did look at her. Looked like a man charmed, spell-bound, fascinated.

A sudden fear smote Olive Gresham's heart. *Had* she cause to dread this woman's influence over her husband?

The song ended: and amidst the low murmur of applause Miss Dorne plunged into Beethoven's "Sonata Pathétique." An opal ring upon her finger glowed and glittered in the light like a fiery eye. Olive hated opals. This one seemed to be mocking her.

The party at Seaview, ladies and gentlemen both, went in for much pleasure and revelry, so that nothing save gaiety was apparent on the surface. But, for all that, a skeleton was there.

A great friendship, a wonderful intimacy had sprung up between Mr. Gresham and Miss Dorne. There lay the skeleton. Olive shuddered: Mrs. Davenal and one or two more keen-sighted women looked on with bitter disapproval: others laughed openly at the passing flirtation, and supposed there was nothing in it save a little idle pastime. How should there be?—was not his wife there?

Olive knew better. She knew better. Too surely she saw her influence over her husband growing less, and that of Miss Dorne greater. He was almost always with Miss Dorne now. She seemed to have fascinated him.

Once, and only once, Olive spoke with him about it. He laughed at her, jested about her jealousy, and called her his "wild rose." His wild rose, as he used to do: and he fondly kissed her, and for the time she was appeased. But not an hour later she saw him smiling into Gertrude Dorne's face, with an expression that no man can well put on unless he loves. The fear, the dread, she knew not of what, came over her again, stronger than before.

What could she do?

Nothing—absolutely nothing. She loved him, but her love was not strong enough to keep him at her side. Miss Dorne's will drew him from her, and kept him away. She was as a queen, and he was her slave. A willing slave, Olive thought sometimes, with a bitter feeling at her heart.

There was no friendship between the women, and no semblance of it. Olive had never liked her from the first. There was something

repulsive about her to Olive's mind—and this would have been the case had there been no John Gresham in existence—something that kept Olive at a distance and prevented any approach to friendship. Miss Dorne seemed wholly indifferent on the subject. Knowing how great her influence was over John Gresham, she cared nothing for his wife. She saw that it tortured her to see her husband so completely enthralled away, and the thought gave Miss Dorne a peculiar kind of satisfaction. Beyond that, she thought but little of John Gresham's wife.

Little by little, a word here and a word there, gathered from the under-current of whispers around, Olive learnt pretty correctly what the past had been—the story of John Gresham and Miss Dorne. He had loved her passionately. She had jilted him—or in the pride of her power had *made believe* to jilt him; and he, in his bitter anguish and mortification, had quitted her for ever without a word of warning or adieu. Had she known where he had flown she would no doubt have recalled him. Giving himself no time for reflection, Mr. Gresham, smarting under his pain, proposed for and married the first pretty girl he met. It happened to be Olive Berkeley. All might have gone on well to the end had he kept clear of Miss Dorne. Or, rather, had Miss Dorne kept clear of him.

But Miss Dorne was not going to do this. Smarting herself under her own folly in having lost him, she resented his marriage as a wrong against herself; a slight thrown upon her. No woman can stand this calmly. She hated the wife, whom she had then never seen, with a great hatred: and when she heard they were at Seaview she went too. So, she had laid herself and her charms out to attract him again; she had told him that she had only been trying his love that fatal time: and John Gresham was losing himself amid her toils. The fools men can be!

One day there was a picnic projected some miles inland. Olive pleaded a headache and begged to be left at home. It was growing intolerably painful to her to watch her husband's attentions to another and to be herself neglected. She knew how it would be. As soon as the carriages had deposited them at their destination, her husband and Miss Dorne would disappear together. People were beginning to talk of it: and this of all things was intolerable to Olive. For her husband's sake as well as her own, she would not go to-day: if she were absent there would be less remark excited at his attentions to another. To her intense surprise, to her delight, Mr. Gresham volunteered to stay at home with her. She smiled and kissed him fondly, hoping he was coming back to his true allegiance.

When they had all gone, and the house was still, she lay down and tried to sleep, for in truth her head ached terribly. John fanned her, and was quite like the husband he had been before Gertrude Dorne came to Seaview. In the calm induced by these new hopes, she fell asleep.

When Olive awoke, she was alone. She got up and combed out her hair and braided it, feeling much better. Throwing off her wrapper, she donned a cool, airy white muslin, with green ribbons at the waist and shoulders. She put a knot of white flowers in her hair, and some at her throat, and went down to find her husband, looking as beautiful as Undine.

The library door was open. Hearing voices in the room, and wondering who was inside, she stepped softly to the door and looked in. Olive started back as if struck. John Gresham sat there by the side of the woman who had won him from her, and he was twisting scarlet fuchsias in her purple-black hair, while she looked up into his face with a subtle mesmerism in her dangerous eyes.

Olive turned away with a shiver and went down to the garden. She had supposed that Miss Dorne had gone to the picnic. Now she saw why her husband had been so willing to stay at home. The thought stabbed her like a knife.

She wandered about the garden for a long time, unutterably wretched. It was late in the afternoon. The sun sank lower and lower, and after a while the visitors came flocking home. She avoided them and wandered off to the shore : she wanted to be alone.

Up and down, up and down. Her walk was a weary one. She saw the white and ghostly glimmer of sails out at sea, and heard the song of the fishermen down in the bay. It all came to her afterwards like a dream.

Poor Olive was mild, gentle, refined. Other women, at least many of them, would have ranted at a husband and given him no peace in his life. But, besides her native gentleness, Olive had an instinct that *that* would not be the way to win John Gresham back.

It was night when she got back to the hotel. Avoiding the principal entrance, she stole in at a side door, and gained her room unseen. What had become of all the people, she wondered ; what were they doing then ? Taking dinner ?—or tea ?—and would they miss her ? Restless and unhappy, she went down into a small room that opened on the garden. She herself was in the shade ; but the ground outside was steeped in light, for the moon was shining.

Suddenly two people came out of the shrubs underneath, nearly close to her. Her heart gave a great throb ; for she saw it was her husband with Gertrude Dorne. And she had been hoping to avoid them !

"I suppose you are right," he said, apparently in answer to some words of hers—"that I ought not to have married. But, Gertrude, the fault lay with you. You drove me away from you."

"I was but trying you, John. The fault lay with *you*. Why did you take my folly up so passionately ?"

"Recrimination will not serve either of us now, my sweetest."

Holding out his arm to her, they passed out of view ; and Olive fell back in a kind of syncope. When she woke up again to the world, she did not know whether the past was not all a wretched dream.

Mrs. Gresham dragged her weary limbs to bed, and the night passed. In the morning, just as she ought to have got up, she fell asleep : and what wonder ? When her eyes opened again to the garish day, the sun was high in the heavens. The first thing that met her eyes was a note from her husband, addressed to her and lying on the dressing-table. He was going away with Miss Dorne, was all he said ; and said it carelessly ; going to escort her home. It concluded with some kind words : " God bless you, Olive, and good bye."

She read the letter through with dry eyes. Her sorrow was tearless, but all the more terrible on that account.

Gone away ! The husband she had loved so well had deserted her for another ; had left her to disgrace and loneliness, and a bitter consciousness of loss. All the light had gone out of life for her in the utter blackness of desolation. Did he mean ever to come back again ? Well, she supposed he might some time, for appearance sake ; but meanwhile *they* were together, and had gone away together.

Putting on as cheerful a face as she could, and dressing herself well, and hoping nobody would suspect what she suspected, Mrs. Gresham went down stairs. Nothing seemed to be thought of the matter there : Mr. Gresham, being an old friend of the Dorne family, had gone to escort Miss Dorne safely home, and might be away a day or two. Olive assented " Yes " in an indifferent tone, and that was all. But the eyes of Mrs. Davenal were fixed on her in a curious manner, and that lady's lips were drawn in to conceal their mockery.

Suddenly was heard a strange roll, as of slow, heavy wheels in the approach to the hotel. In the listlessness of wanting something to do, a few of them sauntered to the window. It was not a hearse : but it was a kind of conveyance not unlike one : it drew up to the door ; and some kind of burthen, covered over, was lifted out. A sudden horror—one of those instincts not to be accounted for—seized on Olive. The gentlemen were silently quitting the room.

" Don't go, Mrs. Gresham ; don't *you* go."

It was Mrs. Davenal who would have kept her : but she broke away in her false strength, and gained the hall. The men were coming in with what they carried.

" Is it—is it my husband ? " she shrieked.

In the confusion no one heeded her. People were flocking up from all parts of the house, and the hall seemed full. " A railway accident," " A collision," was being whispered from one to another.

Yes. He whom they bore was John Gresham. John Gresham in life so recently, but dead now. One of the railway porters who had come with the body explained. The gentleman did not die directly,

he said; he lived long enough to write a note; which he, the porter, had brought. It was addressed to the gentleman's wife, Mrs. Gresham.

She took it in her hand mechanically, and passed into the room where they were placing her husband. Respecting her grief, they left her alone in silence, awed by the white face, full of a dumb, tearless sorrow. Olive opened the letter then, and read it over the dead.

"Olive—My wife,—

"Lying here, with the shadow of death falling over me, I can see things as they are—and I know now that I have been blind, cruel, utterly mistaken. Blind to all that is right, cruel to you, mistaken in myself. I do love you, Olive, with a truer and better love than I ever felt for any other; though you have not lately been thinking so. Heaven forgive me my sin and folly! The love, or, I would rather say, the fascination I felt for Gertrude Dorne is gone. Death is so near that I can look into my own heart, and understand it. I did like her once—but never, Olive, with the pure affection I learnt to feel for you—and when we met again here she bewildered me, turning my head with its own folly. What would have been the final result I scarcely can hide from myself: other men, strong as I, have succumbed to false passion and folly: but the hand of God has interposed and stopped me and her—yes, and her, for she is dead—in our reckless career. I am dying: and I do not say I am sorry that it is so. Better be away from temptation. And—if a death-bed vow of repentance may avail, mine, as the Saviour knows, is sincere and bitter enough. If I could live you might never fully trust me again. But now at the last I can tell you, and tell you truly, that I love you. I long to see your face again, and hear you say that you forgive me. But that cannot be. If we could but realize in life what it must be when this comes! Perhaps, when I am dead, you will say what I would be glad to hear before I say good-night to life. If you do, I shall hear you, Olive, my dear, wronged, faithful wife—I shall hear you. I can hardly hold the pen. I am growing blind—but I love you—I love you at the last—and—in—Heaven——"

And then there was a great blot where the pen fell from John Gresham's nerveless fingers, as the blot of death fell on his life.

She lifted the cloth that covered the dead face, and knelt beside her husband, and called him sweet and tender names.

"I forgive you, John," she said softly. "You hear me, don't you? You are mine now, all mine. I love you, John."

Was it fancy, or did the dead face take on a more peaceful look than it had worn before? She thought it did.

And then Olive Gresham kissed the white lips, and put away the soft hair from his brow, and held his hands in hers. In death their spirits had come together as they might never again have been united in life. And it was better so. Better so.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

"The deceitful villain!"